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Introduction

In his biography of Desmond Tutu, *Rabble-rouser for peace. The authorized biography of Desmond Tutu*, John Allen (2006:224-225) recounts an incident in 1985 when Tutu and his colleague, Simeon Nkoane came across a crowd of mourners busy beating and kicking a man suspected of being a police informer. It happened after a funeral service that Tutu conducted in the township of Duduza for four persons who blew themselves up with doctored hand grenades in a failed attack on the homes of black policemen in three townships. The man was doused with petrol, and as the crowd of youngsters prepared to throw him into the wreck of his burning car, Desmond Tutu and Nkoane waded into the crowd, jostling with the people. As Allen points out, Tutu was shorter than many in the crowd. Reaching the centre of the crowd, the bleeding victim clung to Tutu's legs and after pleading with the youths, Tutu helped Nkoane to pull the man out of the crowd and into a car. This was "theology in the flesh" in action, the small body of Tutu launched into a crowd of infuriated bodies, pleading for mercy. This was the wise, albeit highly risky action of *a-bodily-public-agent-in-community* who acted for the well-being of another human, using language as an integral part of wise practice, pleading for the informer's life.

In a way, Tutu also rescued me with his written words in the book of Paul Germond and Steve de Cruchy, *Aliens in the household of God. Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa* (1997), writing in the foreword that it would be unlikely that Christ would be on the side of those that ostracise people based on their race, gender or sexual orientation, making them aliens, banning them from the household of God. He continues that "if the church, after the victory over apartheid, is looking for a worthy moral crusade, then this is it: the fight against homophobia and heterosexism" (Tutu1997:x). I read these wise words about five years after I stumbled upon the work of James B. Nelson in a local library. His book, *Embodiment: An approach to sexuality and Christian theology* (1978) had a tremendous impact on me with its affirmation of the goodness of the body, the "body-self" as its starting point in reflecting on the reality of God, and Nelson's re-interpretation of the sermon of Paul Tillich, "You are accepted". Nelson (1978:78) expands the words of Tillich, writing:

You are accepted, the total you. Your body, which you often reject, is accepted by that which is greater than you. Your sexual feelings and unfulfilled yearnings are accepted. You are accepted in your ascetic attempts at self-justification or in your hedonistic alienation from the true meaning of your sexuality.

You are accepted in those moments of sexual fantasy which come unbidden and which both delight and disturb you. You are accepted in your femininity and your masculinity, for you have elements of both. You are accepted in your heterosexuality and in your homosexuality, and you have elements of both. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted as a sexual person. If that happens to you, you experience grace.

Read together, the words of Nelson and Tutu affirmed me as a person and sent a strong message of acceptance and goodness of bodily being within the concrete life-world in South Africa where people were (and still are) being marginalised based on sexual orientation, race, gender and disability. It also opened new questions: why the focus on the bodies of those that do not fit the norm of heterosexual society? What about the bodies of the heterosexual majority? How do they make sense of their life through their bodies? Why the moral judgement of people who used their bodies as a site of resistance against oppression? Why the absence of touch within a society where talk of reconciliation is so high on the agenda? How do we get to know each other if we are repulsed by each other's bodies, if the body of the other is *terra incognita*? Why do the words/expressions/sermons/doctrines of the Church have blanket authority over my experiences and efforts to make sense of life through my body?

I was also keenly aware of the injustices in South African society because of apartheid policies, the degradation of black people and the fact that they could not vote in a society where they were the majority. There is the incident of me as a teenager in the early 1980s, standing in the "whites only" section of the post office in the small Free State town of Brandfort, with the "banished" Winnie Mandela entering on the side reserved for blacks, a meshed wire partition between the two sections keeping blacks and whites separate. Yet, in spite of this awareness I dutifully went off to complete my two years of compulsory military service, patrolling a black township with my platoon during the height of the struggle and civil unrest. These impressions and bodily experiences eventually led to my research and work as narrative theologian, exploring the stories written on/in the bodies of people within and against the larger, dominant metanarratives of society. It is also as a narrative theologian that I position myself within the complex and diverse South African life-world: as a white, Afrikaans speaking, middle-aged homosexual South African male from a Dutch Reformed background growing up in apartheid society.

My personal bodily experiences in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa make me keenly aware of how I live and try to make sense of my life-world through my body. This process of sense-making also sharpened the awareness that yes, I have a body...but I also am my body. This awareness in turn attuned me to observing how people around me live in their bodies and how they reflect on life and God from the experiences of living in, and being their bodies within the very complex post-apartheid society. In a sense, I experienced my own, private “corporeal turn” — moving from hatred of my bodily being to acceptance; moving from objectifying my body to the awareness that I am also my body; moving from an understanding of a “non-corporeal soul” to that of an “embodied soul”; moving from my own corporeal turn to an exploration of the corporeal turn in society, in other disciplines, and within theology.

The first part of the title of this thesis, *Theology in the flesh: exploring the corporeal turn from a southern African perspective* is inspired by the book of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the flesh. The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought* (1999), who define “philosophy in the flesh” as a way to see how our physical being and all the things we encounter daily make us who we are. It is also an acknowledgement of the far-reaching and pervasive influence of philosophy in Christian thinking and in my research, doing theology from the body. The second part of the title, “exploring the corporeal turn from a southern African perspective” reflects the main research question: how did the corporeal turn manifest within other academic disciplines, within the history of Christianity and within theology, and how can the corporeal turn be integrated into a contemporary theological anthropology from a southern African perspective?

The main research question is elaborated by the following sub-questions:

- Was there truly a turn towards the body as opposed to a turn away from the body; how did it manifest, and in which academic disciplines?
- How were and are bodies portrayed in southern Africa, and how important are these bodily experiences in evaluating the corporeal turn?
- What were the perceptions of the body in the early Church leading up to the Reformation, and how did this influence contemporary theological thought?
- How did the focus on the body in Protestant theology (as expounded in the body

- theology of James B. Nelson) and Roman Catholic theology (as expounded in Pope John Paul II's theology of the body) develop in the twentieth century, and does it constitute a corporeal turn?
- What does the landscape of contemporary theological anthropology entail, and how does the body and experiences of the body feature in theological anthropology?
- Is there a contemporary theological anthropology that consistently takes the body seriously as an organising principle, and if so, how does it integrate the corporeal turn?

While the research for this thesis lies at the junction between practical theology and systematic theology, it is mainly approached from the perspective of systematic theology. Therefore the usual emphasis of practical theology on empirical research was not followed. Previous research conducted as practical theologian and insights gained in practice have been included in the development of the argument. The research is mainly an interdisciplinary literature research. Secondary sources writing about the body in the early church up to the Reformation, and primary sources regarding the exploration of the corporeal turn within theology have been consulted. The sensitivity to the concrete context, in this case the life-world of southern Africa was sharpened by practical theology. I have endeavoured to bring this awareness into the literature research through recounting the real-life story of someone like Saartjie Baartman, the bodymap of a client, references to the plight of LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) persons in Africa, the very personal story of James Nelson, the vandalism of the painting of president Jacob Zuma and the focus in body theology on experience as a source of revelation. The model proposed in chapter 6 for a contemporary theological anthropology captures this emphasis on the crucial importance, also for systematic theology of the bodily experiences of real people in concrete life-worlds.

It is difficult to disentangle the body from the phenomena of gender, sexuality, race and class, especially in the context of southern Africa where the exploitation of gender (patriarchal heterosexism), sexuality (discrimination and criminal prosecution of LGBTI persons and the abuse of vulnerable others), race (continued racial discrimination) and class (dire poverty) often manifests in the emotional and physical abuse of bodies. This difficulty also became clear in the alternate use of the terms body theology and then sexual theology by James Nelson to denote his work, also in the light that sexual ethics was one of the foundations of

body theology. I nevertheless consciously endeavoured to keep the focus on the body/embodiment with various degrees of success. This is also the reason why the scope of this exploration of the corporeal turn does not include a detail analysis of feminist, womanist and queer studies, although a concerted effort was made to write about the body and the experiences of black men and woman from the pre-colonial to post-apartheid area. The plight of LGBTI persons have been constantly, but discreetly put on the table, from the beginning of this introduction; through the insights of my work as narrative theologian in chapter 1; in the discussion of masculinities in as well as the position of LGBTI persons in Africa in chapter 2; in the exploration of the corporeal turn in the work of James Nelson and the contrasting position in the theology of the body of pope John Paul II in chapter 4 and the concluding remarks in chapter 6.

It is as a practical theologian doing narrative research and therapy that I encountered the work of Wentzel van Huyssteen as applied to practical theology. In discussing postfoundationalism as a practical way of interdisciplinary work, Müller (2008:2) writes about the different perspectives that are possible depending on the epistemological position. He refers to a foundationalist or universal perspective which takes for granted that absolute truth is available for all, a nonfoundationalist or diverse perspective which maintains that there are no foundations and only a diversity of opinions, and a postfoundationalist or transversal perspective. The last approach moves beyond the boundaries of the foundationalist and non-foundationalist perspectives, and works with the notion of “transversal rationality.” Wentzel van Huyssteen, in Müller (2008:4) writes that “in the multidisciplinary use of the concept of transversality there emerge distinct characteristics or features: the dynamics of consciousness, the interweaving of many voices, the interplay of social practices are all expressed in a *metaphor* that points to a sense of transition, lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting and conveying without becoming identical”. Müller continues that in a postfoundationalist approach, one must listen to the stories of people in real-life situations. It is a way of thinking that is concrete and local. Contextuality is a key concept. At the same time, it should reach “beyond local contexts to transdisciplinary concerns”.

Van Huyssteen (2007:421) writes that transversal reasoning is not about arbitrarily opening ourselves up or closing ourselves off to other viewpoints, but rather what it means to discover an epistemic space that allows for the kind of interdisciplinary critical evaluation that includes critical self-evaluation and optimal understanding. There are also natural limits to

dialogue between disciplines. In the transversal, interdisciplinary moment, rich resources are shared, but then, a postfoundationalist approach points back to the contextual, natural, intradisciplinary boundaries of our own disciplines. Van Huyssteen (2007:422) maintains that transversal reasoning means that we have to be alert to “degrees of transversality”, and that different theological approaches could have different degrees of success in interdisciplinary dialogue. It is, however, most important that theology and sciences are able to share concerns and converge in their methodological approaches on specifically identified problems.

Van Huyssteen (2006b:147) emphasises the very important notion of a “democratic presence” for Christian theology in an open, postfoundationalist conversation. Theology shares the interdisciplinary standards of rationality, which will not be hopelessly culture and context bound, but will always be contextually and socially shaped. In this interdisciplinary conversation with other sciences, theology will act as an equal partner with an authentic voice in a postmodern situation. Van Huyssteen (2006b:148) also uses the term “wide reflective equilibrium” to point to the optimal, but fragile communal understanding we are capable of in any given moment. A postfoundationalist notion of reality enables us to communicate across boundaries and move transversally from context to context, from one tradition to another, from one discipline to another. He continues that in this wide reflective equilibrium, we finally find the safe but fragile public space we have been searching for, a space for shuttling back and forth between deep personal convictions and the principles that finally result from interpersonal judgements.

A postfoundationalist theology opens the door very wide to interdisciplinary dialogue, and especially in the context of initiating deeper and deeper levels of inquiry into the body and the experiences of the body within a specific and concrete life-world. This research is not focussed on a specific problem where theology is in dialogue with a few selected partners from other disciplines. It is much rather about enriching knowledge of the body from the perspective of the humanities, social science and natural science. It is the weaving together of many voices — the voices of Church Fathers, mystics and Protestant Reformers, of philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, artists, cognitive scientists, anthropologists, molecular biologists, and novelists. It brings together the voices of flesh and blood people in southern Africa with that of theologians that take the body and the experiences of the body seriously. It is an effort not to treat the body as a mere object, but to listen to the voice and wisdom of the body. I am intensely aware of the density of facts about the body, and

descriptions of bodily experiences in this thesis, but this is necessary to thicken the narrative (around the body), as opposed to a thin and easy-digestible description of the body. It is an effort to illustrate how the body matters, how intricate and complex bodies are, and how profoundly we are the bodies that we have. It is an effort to track the corporeal turn in various disciplines and in theology. The model proposed for a contemporary theological anthropology in chapter 6 is based on this interdisciplinary enquiry with regards to the body. It is not a biblical theological anthropology with a primary focus on Scripture with for example an investigation of the meaning of the body in Paul's letters. That could be the aim of future research projects. It is from this model that future research might venture to revisit and reconstruct e.g. the doctrines of *imago Dei* (image of God), reconciliation and sin, to deconstruct theological narratives about the relationship between body and soul in an effort to make sense of what it means to be human in a global environment.

Chapter 1 is an exploration of the corporeal turn within various academic disciplines and a deeper enquiry into the understanding of the body. The corporeal turn is investigated in philosophy with a focus on the contribution of the French phenomenological philosophers, the bodily philosophy of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, and the linguistic philosophy of Eugene Gendlin. The corporeal turn is further explored in sociology, somatic psychology (with a focus on embodied understanding in the work of Les Todres and Eugene Gendlin), paleoanthropology and anthropology, and within cognitive science and molecular biology. Extensive attention is given in this chapter to the work of Eugene Gendlin which can come across as unnecessary repetition. His contribution is however widely acknowledged within both linguistic philosophy and psychology and his ideas are explored within each of these disciplines. Insights from my work as narrative theologian/therapist and the use of body mapping are discussed. The corporeal turn is evaluated in the light of this interdisciplinary exploration in an effort to develop a deeper and richer understanding of the body.

Chapter 2 is an investigation of the body in colonial and post-colonial southern Africa, as well as within apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The black body is explored in the narratives of early travellers and missionaries in Africa (specifically southern Africa), with a focus on the bodies of black women in the colonial and post-colonial periods, the bodies of males in southern Africa and how bodies were depicted during apartheid, in apartheid theology, and in post-apartheid society. An appeal is made to the bodily experiences of southern Africans in evaluating the corporeal turn.

In Chapter 3 perceptions of the body are explored in the history of Christianity leading up to the Reformation. Corporeal dynamics in early Christian communities are studied, as well as perceptions of the body in the work of the early Church Fathers, such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, and Augustine. Bodily perceptions are investigated in the time of the Desert Fathers, within female mysticism during the Middle Ages, and during the Reformation. The question is asked whether one can refer to these perceptions and experiences of the body/soul in Christian history as a dualism or an ambiguity; or as a unity; or should there be more nuance in the interpretation of these perceptions and experiences? Available secondary literature with a direct focus on the body led me up to the time of the Reformation. The gap between the Reformation and the beginning of the following chapter exploring the corporeal turn in the twentieth century leaves a tantalising space open for further research. The writings of people influenced by these bodily perceptions are however described in chapter 2 when they came to the African continent as the first traveller-explorers in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries and later as missionaries and colonisers in the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Chapter 4 is a discussion of the corporeal turn in the body theology of the Protestant theologian James B. Nelson and Pope John Paul II's theology of the body. The "theologies of the body" of the Roman Catholic theologian Benedict Ashley is also explored, and body theology is evaluated in comparison to theology of the body. The question is also asked whether one can truly talk about a corporeal turn in theology, similar to the way it can be asked within other academic disciplines. There are of course many other mainstream contemporary theologians as well as feminist and queer theologians who explore the body, embodiment and sexuality in their work. The choice to focus on the work of James Nelson is a historical one, based on my personal narrative, but primarily because of the conception of body theology and tracing the impact of body theology and the corporeal turn in contemporary theological anthropologies.

Chapter 5 is an investigation of the body in contemporary theological anthropologies. The quest is for a theological anthropology that reflects a deeper understanding of the rich and complex dimensions of bodily life. The quest is for a theological anthropology that has a sentiment of the flesh. The landscape of contemporary theological anthropology is explored, and contemporary theological anthropologies that take the body seriously are evaluated. The theological anthropologies of Wesley Wildman, Wentzel van Huyssteen, Nancey Murphy,

Fount LeRon Shults and Andrea Ng'wesheni are discussed with a focus on the Trinitarian theological anthropology of David H. Kelsey. Kelsey develops a contemporary theological anthropology that consistently takes the body seriously as an organising principle, and he expounds it further with notions of the “proximate context”, “the living body” (a theology of creation and birth), “personal bodies”, “flourishing bodies”, “eschatologically fully consummated living human personal bodies”, and Jesus Christ as “imager of God in his humanity” and as the “grammatical paradigm” of human being. His work is evaluated as a contemporary theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh.

Chapter 6 is an evaluation of the corporeal turn in theology. I propose a model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing within the context, and from the perspective of southern Africa. It is a contemporary theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh and a sensitivity to the textures of life, which functions within the intricate and complex connection of the living body, language and experiencing in a concrete life-world with an openness to the “more than”.

This research indicates the importance of the body and bodily experiences in revisiting and reconstructing church doctrines, and in creating church liturgy. It emphasises the importance of a theological anthropology that has a deep respect for the body and bodily experiences, and the intimate link with language in making sense of our life-world, and in reflecting on the reality of God. This is of crucial importance when talking, for example, about reconciliation, justice, atonement, human nature, and sin in a country like South Africa where there is an “embodied history” of discrimination, humiliation, marginalisation, and political and economic exploitation and violence.

The artwork on the cover page by the South African artist, Diek Grobler is an attempt to reflect this profound respect for the body and the experiences of the body within theological anthropology and at the same time, it illustrates the connectedness of man to the web of living creatures in the cosmos. It is a reinterpretation within a southern African context of the illustration in *Liber divinatorum operum* (*Book of Divine Works*) to Hildegard von Bingen's vision of the relation between man and the universe as microcosm and macrocosm, which was compiled in the period between 1163 and 1174 (Flanagan 1998:135). A depiction of Hildegard von Bingen recording her visions in the lower left hand corner of the original illustration was replaced by that of Archbishop Desmond Tutu as an acknowledgement of his

“vision” for a non-racial, non-sexist, reconciling and humane society and for constantly speaking up for those with little or no power to the “irritation” of those with political, economical and religious power.

Chapter 1

The body: an interdisciplinary perspective on the corporeal turn

In his novel “The Body”, Hanif Kureishi explores the idea of personal identity and the extent to which we are rooted in our body. The book is about a middle-aged playwright who is offered the chance to trade his aging, sagging body for a youthful, attractive body. Kureishi (2002:29-32) writes about how the playwright is reflecting on his own body and about his existence, while the older man is waking up in his younger body after the body-transplant operation has been performed:

...I tried to dissociate myself from my body, as if it were an embarrassing friend I no longer wanted to know. My pride, my sense of myself, my identity, if you will, didn't disappear; rather it emigrated....I had always taken it for granted that I was a person, which was a good thing to be. But now I was being reminded first and foremost I was a body, which wanted things. In this strange condition, I thought of how babies are close to their mother's skin almost the whole time. A body is the child's first playground.

Kureishi (2002:34) then portrays something of how the body is socially constructed:

The older and sicker you get, the less your body is a fashion item, the less people want to touch you. You will have to pay. Masseurs and prostitutes will caress you, if you give them money. How many therapies these days happen to involve the “laying-on of hands”? Nurses will handle the sick. Doctors spend their lives touching bodies...Priests and politicians tell people what to do with their bodies. People always choose their work according to their preferences about bodies.

So what then do priests, politicians — and scientists have to say about our bodies? This is not such an easy or obvious question to answer. In contemporary society the body has become a consumer item. The emphasis is on appearance and presentation. The body has become pliable through plastic surgery, tissue engineering, and bionic and gene therapy with cyberspace changing the format of human embodiment. Ammicht-Quinn (2004:72) writes that one of the main features of contemporary lifestyle is being occupied with the body; an entire industry exists that serves the needs for wholeness, beauty and salvation, which traditional religious institutions fail to satisfy. This occupation with the body does not necessarily hail a defeat of the body-mind dualism. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:2) refers to the Cartesian legacy as a “350-year-old wound” that is still in need of healing and “ironically, it

is being reopened by reductionist thinking that collapses body into brain — *the brain* — thereby passing living reality”. The turn away from the Cartesian dualism with its focus on the body-mind divide has, in certain disciplines, become a turn to and a fixation on the brain-mind or brain-consciousness debate, an equation which once again sidesteps the body and compounds the body into brain.

However, the occupation and even near obsession with the body in contemporary society does in a way illustrate the extent and the impact of the corporeal turn, which occurred in various disciplines during the twentieth century. Turner (1996:20) argues that the challenge by feminism, postmodernism, and critical theory to the Cartesian dualism happened as a result of the “philosophical and social consequences of major transformations in the nature of society, primarily towards the emergence of a postmodern or information society”. He writes that in a post-industrial society there is a “strong commercial and consumerist interest in the body as a sign of the good life and an indicator of cultural capital” (Turner 1996:3). He continues that a society, which emphasises consummation, also focuses on the body beautiful, the rejection of death, a denial of the ageing body, and the fit, sporting body. The body has become especially important in industrially advanced societies where developments in medical technology and medical practice have changed the structure of disease and illness (Turner 1996:5). He continues that one of the social impacts of these changes includes a population with a significant number of retired, elderly and disabled people. This reality has an enormous impact on economic productivity and the way people spend their leisure time and money. These are some of the reasons why there was a turn to the body in humanities and social sciences “as a consequence of these macro changes in the social, economic and legal status of human embodiment in a society of rapidly expanding technology” (Turner 1996:6).

In her book, “The Corporeal Turn” (2009), Maxime Sheets-Johnstone writes that the humanities and human sciences were “the spawning ground of two fundamental conceptual shifts in the twentieth century: the earlier linguistic turn and the later corporeal turn”. She writes that each movement shifted the attention “to something long taken for granted”, meaning the use of language and the body (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:2). She continues that the corporeal turn was not only about giving attention to “something heretofore simply assumed and largely ignored, but of correcting something misrepresented for centuries”. Here she refers to the Cartesian legacy where the body was seen as inferior and subservient to the

mind, or as she describes it “as mere material handmaiden of an all-powerful mind, a necessary but ultimately discountable aspect of cognition, intelligence, and even affectivity”. Her description of the corporeal turn fits that of Surkis (2012:704), who describes a turn not only in terms of a change in direction, but also as “formative: they shape and reshape by cutting away”. The historian, Judith Surkis refers to Gabrielle Spiegel, who argues that a multitude of challenges arose after the Second World War with regard to the philosophical investigation of language, the anthropological exploration of culture, the psychoanalytical investigation of subject formation, and the limits and possibilities of the formation of knowledge (Surkis 2012:703). She continues that the generation who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s posed further questions that resulted in the various “turns”, including the linguistic and corporeal turns, which lead to “a massive change in our understanding of the nature of historical reality”. Surkis (2012:706) also refers to Martin Jay, who writes about several “linguistic turns”; it begins with language philosophy as influenced by Wittgenstein and the later German hermeneutical tradition, and could be subdivided into the existentialist tradition (Gadamer) and the critical theory tradition (Habermas). She concludes that the linguistic turn and other “turns” could be “better understood not as historically inevitable disciplinary trajectories, but as specifically located, imaginatively cast, at once multiple, overlapping, and dynamically constellations”. The linguistic philosopher, Hans Ruthrof (2000) as cited by Robbins (2005:824) talks about the transition in a literary environment from a “linguistic turn” during the twentieth century to a “corporeal turn” in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Sheets-Johnstone (2009:1) views the corporeal turn as far from complete and envisions the corporeal turn as “an ever-expanding, continuous, and open-ended spiral of inquiry in which deeper and deeper understandings are forged, understandings that in each instance themselves call out for deeper and deeper inquiries”. She does not adhere to any ideological basis for her work, which includes phenomenological (a context of past meanings), phylogenetic (evolutionary capacities) and ontogenetic (developmental capacities) perspectives, but writes that her endeavour is attached to “a belief in experience as the grounding source of knowledge and a dedicated examination of experience as the testing ground of one’s knowledge” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:2). She writes that this dedicated examination requires an openness to interdisciplinary investigations and that the disciplines she links in her research hold the body as foundation and “testify to the rich and complex dimensions of bodily being” and that such interdisciplinary research “attest(s) to the importance of

exploring the living realities of corporeal life and of understanding in the deepest sense in each instance what it means to be the bodies we are” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:3). The fundamental realities of life “exceed the bounds of a single discipline” and therefore it is crucial “to open wider and wider vistas in which it is not so much conclusive answers one seeks as comprehensive understandings adequate to the realities themselves” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:16).

The interdisciplinary perspective on the body in this chapter does not only strive to illustrate the corporeal turn in a variety of disciplines, but endeavours to thicken our description and understanding of the body, to forge “deeper and deeper understandings” of the lived-body. The quest in the following chapters is also to open “deeper and deeper inquiries” within theology: does the body have a foundation in theology? Did theology take note of the corporeal turn? Can the body and the experiences of the body serve as a “grounding source of knowledge” in theology, and how? What were the corporeal dynamics in Christianity? What were the experiences of the body in sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa in particular, and how did theology interpret those experiences? How can theological anthropology reflect a deeper understanding of “the rich and complex dimensions of bodily life” in the endeavour to answer the questions about how we are, how we ought to be, and who we are in God?

1.1 Philosophy

Philosophy laid the foundation for ideas and enquiries about a variety of notions, such as “being”, “personhood”, “soul and matter”; and “body and embodiment”. These were further explored and developed in social sciences and the humanities particularly, but also in natural sciences, including cognitive science, palaeoanthropology, and biology. Any inquiry into how the body is viewed within Western philosophy touches on the mind/body problem. It is nearly impossible to speak only about the body and not about its connection with the mind/spirit/soul, which sometimes also serves to designate awareness or consciousness. This, in turn is connected to concepts of Being and personhood, as well as the notion of human uniqueness.

1.1.1 African notions of Personhood

Within Africa, the concept of personhood or humanness is expressed in the notion of Ubuntu. Khoza (2011:437) writes that this forms the basis of all healthy relations in African societies. He continues that the contemporary employment of “Ubuntu” in intellectual circles can be traced to Pan-Africanism which is “the political expression of an intellectual and spiritual movement” that was prevalent in West African and later southern African thinking during colonialism and thereafter. He writes that the principal message “lies in the indication that we, as Africans, believe that we have special distinctive modes of behaviour, expression and spiritual self-fulfilment: this is something that has been challenged by destructive Western thought and belief but still lies embedded in our collective consciousness” (Khoza 2011: 438). The notion of Ubuntu is expressed in ancient African proverbs, for example, the Nguni saying which translates to “a person is a person through other persons”, the Xitsonga expression “one finger cannot pick up a grain” and the traditional Xhosa proverb “no genius is so clever that he can scratch his own back. We are all interdependent”. The quintessence of these axioms is that “one’s humanity (humanness), one’s personhood, is dependent upon one’s relationship with others” (Khoza 2011:439).

This relational notion of personhood is advocated by Uzuoku (1996:35) to reconstruct African societies and the church. He writes that this notion should be the guiding principle in Africa for democratic and human rights as well as complete respect for the local and universal church as a testimony of transformation in society. He expands his ideas for the whole of Africa, but he explores the relational notion of personhood within a western African context (Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Rwanda and Nigeria). He writes that the social organisation of communities is marked by complex relationships and its survival is linked to the way these relationships are still being serviced (Uzuoku 1996:36). He continues that in many of these societies the concept of a human person is related to “the pre-existence of each human as spirit in the land of the dead”. A human person can furthermore be conveyed as a “multiplicity of souls or life principles” which in some cases can be associated with a guardian spirit as the humanising part of a person. Uzuoku (1996:37) makes the crucial observation that “relationship is not simply a way in which the subject may realize itself. It is the essential element of “personhood”. The quality of a person is dependent on the intensity of maintaining these relationships”. He then makes an interesting connection between the development of this African notion of personhood and the importance of rites of passages in

societies where a person can learn and experience “the channels of relationship in order to become a person”. These rites of passages are off course intimately connected to the body of a person undergoing various rituals and being exposed to the elements of nature. He continues to link this relational notion of personhood with the southern African notion of ‘ubuntu’ with its focus on the emergence of the human person. These rites of passages are however often conducted within the context of a patriarchal, heterosexistic society and the focus is primarily on the bodies of males where the bodies of females (young women) are subjected to metanarratives connected to upholding patriarchal values.

This notion departs from Western humanism which tends to view “humankind as the apex of the evolutionary process” and man “as the measure of all things” (Khoza 2011:444). He continues that African humanism differs from Western humanism when it comes to rugged individualism and atheism. Ubuntu resists the idea that “self-interest is the proper goal of all human actions...that the individual has the irrefutable right to attain the highest degree of self-fulfilment...irrespective of social duties”. Ubuntu is also “resiliently religious” and is described as being “expansive, transcendental and centrifugal”. Khoza (2011:445) writes that not even death can interrupt Ubuntu. There is an intimate link between the spirit of the universe and those who came before, “hence the fundamental anti-individualism and religiosity in Ubuntu-type humanism comprise elements that can never be separated from Ubuntu”. He continues that when Ubuntu instructs “*I am because they are; and they are because I am*”, the “I” in community is written large; the “I” is the community individualised, which “reaches beyond the grave”. Khoza (2011:446) argues that Ubuntu broadens the respect for the individual (the dignity and rights of each person in the social unit) and purges collectivism of its negative elements — in so doing, it strikes a balance between “complete individual autonomy (“aberrant individualism seeking to gratify base egoistic needs”) and homonymy (“the abject subjugation of the individual to group thinking and conformism”). When Ubuntu is “practiced” in a country like South Africa, “whose socio-political and economic structures are based on racial discrimination, one should appreciate the need for self-respect and dignity for others and understand that “man everywhere derives a sense of his own importance from his interaction with other humans and society at large. It is self-assessment arrived at objectively as well as subjectively” (Khoza 2011:447).

My search for African philosophies that incorporates the notion of the body/embodiment was limited by the scarcity of available literature. Referring to the work of their contributors about

perceptions of self-hood in Africa, Maw and Picton (1992:2) write that African mothers seem to provide more ego-support than their European counterparts, because of close skin contact and frequent suckling. Based on the case study (Maw and Picton 1992), it was found that in Uganda, the father's identity seems immaterial in comparison with the mother's when she gives birth. Furthermore, it appears that babies are more fused to their mothers than in Western society. They refer to John Blacking who writes that in Venda tradition the need for a spirit to find its way into the world of the living is used to explain the egoism of a baby. Babies then develop human characteristics through physical experiences of the body and through relationships with others. Blacking also presents evidence from riddles where different body parts are equated with the home and landscape, suggesting a projection of the self through these descriptions rather than through the body itself (Maw & Picton 1992:4). He suggests that there is a link between the outer and inner reality through the body. The inner reality is explored through the outside consisting of ancestor spirits, community and nature. Bodily experiences are used to express social, personal and spiritual identity. Maw and Picton (1992:5) continues that spirits are viewed as very powerful although originally they are outside the self. The Cartesian model is an inadequate model to explain this. They suggest that what Westerners think of as "mind" or "self" is seen as separate by Africans, working with a concept of a separate mind and a separate body.

Azenabor (1999:125) refers to the Esan tribe of Nigeria and writes that Africans also link "spirit" or "mind" to natural things like a tree, stone, river or moon. Mind/spirit provides the essence and life. The Esan has a pluralistic concept of man, composed of heart, soul, mind, breath and body (Azenabor 1999:126). He continues that a distinction is made between the disembodied and unembodied mind, where the unembodied mind can leave the body and choose the form of another human or an animal. The Esan also does not conceive of a life after death outside this world. The soul can reincarnate fourteen times and then it disintegrates. The soul is (therefore) not immortal (Azenabor 1999:130).

1.1.2 Philosophy in the flesh

The concept of Being as a category structure developed historically from pre-Socratic philosophy; Plato and Aristotle elaborated on, and further refined the concept. The world has a hierarchical category structure with Being seen as the all-inclusive category. Aristotle regards it as an object of study which has an essence. Lakoff and Johnson (1999:401) refer to

the “Folk Theory of Essences”, which expresses the notion that humans share a common human nature that influences the way humans naturally act. This implies that essences have a causal effect — “every kind of thing has an essence that makes it the kind of thing it is. The way each thing naturally behaves is a consequence of its essence”. Lakoff and Johnson(1999:373) view Aristotle’s way of thinking as deeply influential on contemporary conceptions of metaphysics, theology, and the nature of science. They describe how the philosophic positions of Plato and Aristotle are to a great extent based on “metaphorical concepts...made possible by folk theoretical assumptions” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:389). These assumptions are based on metaphors that are deeply embedded in Western philosophical traditions. It is necessary to take note that Aristotle’s ideas were rooted in a worldview which saw excellence “grounded in a habitus that involved bodily perfection and control” (Turner 2008:2).The quest for Being continues even though many philosophers (Merleau-Ponty, Dewey, Whitehead and Rorty) have shown that the form/matter model (matter organised by form) is but one way of understanding things and that the idea of substance (everything has an essence that makes it the kind of thing it is) is completely discredited. For many the search for Being is the search for God who is the ultimate source that gives purpose to the universe and meaning to human life, a notion which is very similar to Plato’s Idea of the Good, the essence of essence (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:389). It is within the concept of Being that the exploration of the body in philosophy is situated.

In part IV of *Discourse on the Method*, 1673, René Descartes wrote his famous conclusion “Cogito ergo sum” — “I think, therefore I am”, which implies that when he thinks, he exists — a truth he can never doubt. His influence can still be felt in present-day philosophical theories; great parts of first-generation cognitive science have been founded on his conclusions (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:392). Lakoff and Johnson list some of his important ideas, including

- all thought is conscious;
- the mind is disembodied with a mental substance, while the body consists of a physical substance;
- the only essence of humans is the capacity to reason;
- human reason excludes imagination and emotion since these are bodily, and not part of human essence; and
- mathematical knowledge can be certain, because it is about form and not content.

This last idea as expressed in Cartesian dualism had profound consequences on philosophical thinking, stating that the essence of humans has no connection with their bodies. The affect of the Cartesian dualism has been pervasive in phenomenology and on parts of Anglo-American philosophy, as well as other disciplines including education, sociology, theology, popular culture and in the continuous use of a computer as metaphor for the mind, leading “to the disassociation of reason from emotion and thus to the downplaying of emotional and aesthetic life in our culture” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:401). The tenets of his theory of mind have been very influential and are taught and accepted from generation to generation as self-evident truth. The Cartesian inheritance basically states that the only thing that makes humans distinct is their ability for rational thought, which is conscious and essentially disembodied. The nature of the mind can be understood without having to know anything about the body, imagination or emotion.

They have a similar opinion of Immanuel Kant’s moral theory (what “ought” to be) since it is based on a view of concepts that does not match empirical results in cognitive science (what “is”). Moral concepts expounded by Kant like respect, freedom, autonomy and moral law had a profound influence on the Protestant tradition. The central pillar of Kant’s moral philosophy is that the foundation of morality lies in pure reason. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999:439) such a notion is impossible and cannot exist. The idea that the foundations of morality have no connection with human emotion or their bodies is absurd to them, writing emphatically that “the idea of pure reason that can function in the moral domain independent of emotion is empirically untenable”.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999:409) point out that “the body of evidence that supports second-generation cognitive science requires us to reject every tenet of this Cartesian view of mind”. Turner (2008:76) writes that the rejection of the Cartesian mind/body dualism characterised post-war French philosophy, and within the phenomenological movement the body was, for someone like Gabriel Marcel (1951), at the centre of the ontological problem. In his experience, the body is always immediately present in any experience without having an exterior relationship to existence. Mental and physical experiences are united in the body. Having a body implies that I am always embodied and my existence is “experienced-embodiment”; it means that I am my body, which is my “primordial sense of possession and control”. Turner continues that for Marcel, “the body is the ultimate starting point for any reflection on being and having, on existence and possession”.

In his book, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), Maurice Merleau-Ponty criticises Sartre and mainly objects that he did not overcome dualism, but that he basically replaced it with the distinction between *en-soi* (being-in-itself) and *pour-soi* (being-for-itself). In this, he was influenced by Husserl and Heidegger; he made this distinction “to bring out the irreducible presence of free will and intentional action as necessary features of human existence” (Turner 2008:77). Intentional consciousness takes a central role in Sartre’s philosophy, and it may seem as if the body plays only a small part in people’s being-in-the-world. Turner (2008:77), however, writes that the body is significant in Sartre’s analysis of being-for-others in exploring the question of the existence of other minds. The body is our only contact with the world, “which constitutes our contingency”. Other minds can only be known as they are expressed through the body. Sartre distinguishes between three ontological dimensions of the body: the body-for-itself (what I experience as I live is always from the point of view of my body and I locate myself through objects in the world); the-body-for-others (other persons are perceived as being-in-body, not only as flesh, but always in a concrete and specific context which is interpreted as meaningful); the objectified, alienated body (which when seen by others as merely a piece of flesh, the body simply becomes a body with “an intimate inside as an impersonal outside” (Turner 2008:77)).

The result of these arguments in French phenomenological philosophy was a complete break from Cartesian mind/body dualism and a profound confirmation that the body is never only a piece of flesh seen as an object, but always consciousness embodied. Lakoff and Johnson (1999:365) write that “the embodied mind is part of the living body and is dependent on the body for its existence”. The characteristics of mind are shaped by the body and the brain and the way in which the body is situated in everyday life. Sigurdson (2008:41) writes that it matters how we speak of the body and to do it in a manner of “conceiving our embodiment with practical implications”. The body is not always this solid foundation, but can also be viewed “as an enigmatic dimension of ourselves that constantly faces the invisible and transcendent”. He maintains that the body, as well as the experience of the body always exist in a specific situation. Here Sigurdson (2008:35) quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who wrote about the body as “a vehicle of being in the world and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them”. Lakoff and Johnson (1999:565) emphatically state that “our corporeality is part of the corporeality of the world”. In this they build upon the statements of D. Abram (1996) who refers to “the-more-than-human-world”, and to M. Merleau-Ponty who

said that our flesh is from the “flesh-of-the world”. They continue that “our body is intimately tied to what we walk on, sit on, touch, taste, smell, see, breathe and move within”.

The book of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), “*Philosophy in the flesh*” greatly influenced my thinking on embodiment, and in part inspired the title of this thesis. They define “philosophy in the flesh” as “a way to know ourselves better, to see how our physical being — flesh, blood, and sinew, hormone, cell, and synapse — and all things we encounter daily in the world make us who we are” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:568). Their philosophy in the flesh also builds upon the insights of cognitive science with its research on notions of concepts, language, reason and feeling and in doing so, they promote a conversation between philosophy and cognitive science; they view the latter as one of the most significant resources for self-knowledge. They are of the opinion that the conventional Western view of a person (a division between mind and body, someone with universal reason, an exclusive conceptual system with radical freedom) is completely out of touch with the findings of cognitive science and neuroscience. The characterisation of human nature by cognitive science, neuroscience and biology, works with the concepts of variation, change and evolution, rather than with the theory of essence (Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 557). Their concept of an embodied person is someone whose conceptual system is formed by their conceptual and motor systems, whose understanding of the world can only be formed through their body, who is to a great extent in touch with the reality of their environment through the concepts of their perceptual, imaging and motor systems, whose rational conclusions are based on sensorimotor deductions, for whom truth and knowledge is dependent on embodied understanding, and whose mind is not separated or independent of the body since all concepts and reasoning derives from the sensorimotor system (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:555).

They consider the human will to be embodied, since reason is embodied and cannot overcome the limitations of the body. They continue that morality does not originate from a “higher source”, but is derived from the specific nature of events as experienced through the body with each person carrying a moral pluralism based on a variety of moral metaphors. They link all human moral ideals (for example, freedom, compassion, justice, tolerance, virtue) to the human concern for well-being (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:290). Based on important findings in cognitive semantic research on what moral concepts are and how their logic works, they state that “our cognitive unconscious is populated with an extensive system of metaphoric mappings for conceptualization, reasoning about, and communicating our

moral ideals”, implying that most of our moral concepts are structured metaphorically. Another finding was that these moral metaphors are relatively constrained, since they have their grounding in our bodies and social interactions, and that all of these metaphors relate to experiences of well-being, particularly to physical well-being. It is better to be *healthy* than sick; it is better to breath, drink and eat substances that are *pure* and not contaminated; it is better to be *strong* than weak; it is better to be *in control* than to be out of control or to be controlled by others; it is better to have *wealth* than to be poor; it is better to be *upright* and *balanced* than off balance or cringed (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:291). They further argue that these moral metaphors are ordered into “relatively coherent ethical perspectives” by which we live, based on two fundamental models of the family: the Strict Father and the Nurturing Parent (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:313). They then ask who is the parent in the “Family of Man” and argues that the answer determines the ultimate view of moral authority, with typical candidates being “God, Universal Reason, Universal Moral Feeling, and Society as a whole” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:318). They conclude that morality can never again be understood as “pure moral concepts” which are understood “in themselves” or in relation to other pure moral concepts — rather, they are metaphorical and draw their patterns from experiential domains that involve “values, goods, ends and purposes” from living-body experiences (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:334).

The body is never simply a vessel for the disembodied mind. Lakoff and Johnson (1999:563) also describe the influence of the disembodied mind in the area of religious and spiritual life. They explain how our system of metaphors reinforces “the illusion of a disembodied Subject”. As a consequence, the disembodied Mind or Subject has also been identified in various religious traditions as Soul or Spirit. This Subject has been portrayed in a majority of spiritual traditions as totally independent of the body for its existence. They have no problem with the concept of soul in a spiritual tradition, if it is embodied — “shaped in important ways by the body, located forever as part of the body, and dependant for its ongoing existence on the body”. It is impossible for them to acknowledge the existence of a disembodied mind, which is thinking and free-floating, even though all the major traditions mythologise Soul as such. Lakoff and Johnson (1999:564) propagate the notion of an embodied spirituality that does justice to the experience of people, away from the concept of spirituality, which, in many cultures is portrayed as disembodied, and in terms of transcendence of this world. They describe “imaginative empathetic projection” as a major part of spiritual experience. It is the experience of being in the other, an experience of

transcendence, when, through cognitive simulation, we simulate the movement of others in a form of empathetic projection. They regard empathy as the precondition for “nurturant morality”, linking moral values to spiritual experiences. They promote a metaphor for God, which is based on empathy for all things, and an embodied spirituality. They strikingly write about an embodied spirituality that “requires pleasure, joy in the bodily connection with earth and air, sea and sky, plants and animals — and the recognition that they are all more than human, more than any human beings could ever achieve” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:566). An empathetic connection to the world is for them but one aspect of spirituality that is made possible by the body. The body infuses spiritual experience with passion — and the mechanism to achieve this is through “metaphor”. They state:

An ineffable God requires metaphor not only to be imagined but to be approached, exhorted, evaded, confronted, struggled with, and loved. Through metaphor the vividness, intensity, and meaningfulness of ordinary experience becomes the basis for passionate spirituality (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:567).

Referring to the term “embodied” in the work of Lakoff and Johnson as well as other academics, Sheets-Johnstone (2009:215) criticises the term “embodied” as “a lexical band-aid covering a three-hundred-and-fifty year old wound generated and kept suppurating by a schizoid metaphysics”. She writes that the term “embodiment” draws our attention away from the task to understand animate forms as the starting point of biological evolution (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:215). She rightfully asks whether our mind, our sex, our gender, our emotions, our cognitive functions or ourselves are “embodied”, thereby creating a “fixed and constant container sense of experience” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:337). She continues that our experiences are animated and our terminology should reflect this fact; our terminology “should be true to the truths of experience”.

1.1.3 Gendlin’s philosophy on a new mode of language beyond postmodernism

“Language brings patterns and distinctions, but *what it says* exceeds them.” With this sentence Gendlin (1997:3) endeavours to develop a “new mode of language and thinking” that speaks from what is *more than* conceptual patterns. He continues to argue that it is necessary to philosophise beyond postmodernism in a very new way from the perspective of experience, which extends to “*the more, practice, situations, situatedness, wisdom, the body,*

thickness, the open...”. He writes that postmodernism comes to a dead end when it dismisses the role of experience as impure and not purely logical (Gendlin 1997:6). He wants to reverse this and continues that we “*can let “saying” say what happens when we say it, and when we say any other words*”. We can speak from the different roles of experience where “situations are always wider than the existing language”, and where the capacities of language extends beyond distinctions and concepts. He points out that experience does not arrive in patterns of cognitive units and it is always open “for further living and action” (Gendlin 1997:7). He continues to refer to Wittgenstein who wrote that “a word says (means) *what it does* in a situation”, which implies that the way we use words are not fixed to certain concepts. Gendlin (1997:8) strikingly writes that “we can say that the situation *gives the word a new life*. A situation *changes itself* in response to words, and this change is their meaning...the situation *gives birth* to the word that *changes* it. Situation and words *cross*, so that each becomes part of the meaning of the other”. He continues that such a new way of thinking about language opens new directions. Words then enable us to “speak from *ourselves* and from how words *come* in our *bodies*”. This is also an endeavour to move beyond the subject/object distinction; he argues that philosophy should not begin with perceptions since perceptions arise from a concept which upholds the subject/object distinction (Gendlin 1997:14). He continues that perceptions are about something observed, something over there, something external. He writes that “*we will move beyond the subject/object distinction if we become able to speak from how we interact bodily in our situation*”, which is not perception in the first place (Gendlin 1997:15). He expands this notion and continues that people “exist in terms of living and interaction”, and not as observations. They speak from being bodily in their situations, with bodies that employ more than the five senses to sense the physical and to sense their situation. He continues that “my *bodily* sense of living is my situation”.

All human experience involves speech, even without words since “the implicit *implies* action and speech” (Gendlin 1997:17). He continues that in experience there is “the implicit language unable to come, struggling, trying to come” and that the available phrases are often inadequate to relay the sensing of a particular experience. Gendlin (1997:19) refers to Wittgenstein who argued that language does not consist of universals, but that “the sense we make with words is unique in each case, and not forced into one pattern”. A philosophy of language moves beyond postmodernism when it is capable of speaking from this sensed experience. He writes that a philosophy of language “is possible because words can say how they work”, meaning that words can say and mean how they work in almost any context and

say “how their patterns are exceeded by what functions implicitly” (Gendlin 1997:21). He continues that words have seldom been allowed to say how they work. The implicit and explicit are never equal and speaking from this intricacy carries the implicit forward (Gendlin 1997:21). In this sense “language elaborates (it does not create) human living” (Gendlin 1997:25).

Gendlin (1997:26) identifies four kinds of “body-environment interaction”, and describes it as “a derivation of behaviour, perception, and patterns, which makes it understandable how patterns can carry a body-environment process forward”. The first “broad generative assertion” is that “the body *knows* people and situations directly”. He continues that the body performs an “implicit knowing function”, knowing the language and how it is relevant to the situation. He writes that “a living body *knows* its environment by *being* it”, indicating that the body and its environment are one interaction (Gendlin 1997:27). He continues that we have situated bodies and that “now we can understand how we understand by being our bodily living-in our situations”. The second assertion is that this bodily knowing is not perception as if it is “something spread out before the body”. Gendlin (1997:27) writes that this kind of knowing does not involve the subject/object or signifier/signified. He continues that this kind of bodily knowing is about a living body as ongoing environmental interaction. The third assertion is that “a living body is a self-organizing process” in the sense that living bodies “*imply* their next bit of life-process (Gendlin 1997:27). The body is its own next step. He continues that the interrelation between the body and its environment cannot be observed by another observer and therefore the body is a self-organizing process. Gendlin (1997:28) writes that “the next bodily-implied bit of human living is often something we want to *say*”. This is the fourth assertion which holds that “speaking is a special case of bodily interaction” and that the body implies “what we want to do *and say*”. He continues that our bodies can become uncomfortable with “sophisticated linguistic and philosophical detail”. The uncomfortable body then implies “finely shaped new steps to deal with such a situation” and shapes the thing we say next, and continues to “perform many other implicit functions essential to language”. He refers to this process as “implicit governing”, expanding on the notion that “our bodies imply the next words and actions to carry our situations forward”, and in doing so it creates the possibility of new meanings.

Gendlin (1997:32) argues that “experiencing is inherently a sense-making” and that there is no unsymbolised experience to be interpreted. He continues that this sense-making is “always

implicitly ‘symbolized’ at least by interactional events with other people” and these events are elaborated by implicit language. He writes that “experiencing is this eventing; we cannot represent or construct it. We can only carry it forward”. There can be no sense-making without experiencing and eventing. He also writes that language is always public meaning and that the social and public nature of language entails that “what we are living is carried forward into words, what an individual says cannot help but be significant to others” (Gendlin 1997:33). Referring to Wilhelm Dilthey’s use of “experiencing”, “expression” and “understanding”, he argues that there is a kind of continuity between the three concepts and that “in understanding a text or another person we neither impose our meanings or just receive theirs” (Gendlin 1997:41). He continues that we can only understand others better than they understand themselves “if we carry their experiencing forward with our understanding (our further experiencing), when the author’s experiencing is reconstituted as our experiencing — accurately but enriched by ours, as ours is enriched by theirs”. Dilthey wrote that “in principle any human expression is understandable” and Gendlin (1997:41) adds that “the more unique it is, the more significant it will be to us when it implicitly crosses with ours”.

Sheets-Johnstone (2009:378) writes that “to meet the challenge of languaging” dynamic experience “is to be true to the truths of the experience”. These dynamic experiences refer to the “complex diversity of feelings and thoughts that exceed the bounds of everyday language because they are experienced dynamically”. She continues to propose a methodology along phenomenological lines that “demands our drawing back from an easy, ready-made everyday language and our turning first of all to experience itself”. To be able to do this, she continues that we have to “bracket” our natural attitude towards the world and “thereby meet an experience as if for the first time”. She understands the notion of bracketing as a process where everyday judgements, beliefs and reactions are put aside, as well as “everyday habits of languaging experience”; in doing this, experience itself is moved to the foreground and we can listen to its interior dynamics. Referring to the literary imagination of an author in creating a credible character, she writes that the author must be able to describe “in livingly resonant ways the interior dynamics of the character’s experiences — his or her motivations, plans, recollections, grievances, cravings, and so on” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:379). She continues that such a keen literary imagination “rings dynamically true to the truths of human experience”. She refers to Husserl’s phrase “for all this, names are lacking” in emphasising the need to first experience the dynamics before trying to describe or name them (Sheets-

Johnstone 2009:380). She continues that “*names* are indeed lacking not only because everyday language is basically deficient with respect to dynamics, but because *names* cannot do justice to dynamics”. Emotions have a double dynamic in the sense that they “move through us in distinctive ways and move us to move in distinctive ways”. She writes that we experience cognitive emotions in feeling fear, sadness and delight, where a “felt dynamic moves through our bodies and moves us to move — or not to move — in an affectively unique manner”.

Horst Ruthrof (2000) developed his notion of corporeal semantics based on insights from philosophy, cognitive science, cognitive linguistics, and cognitive rhetoric; he argues that “the body is always already part of language as discourse” (Robbins 2005:824). From his viewpoint language is always negotiated via the body by means of the nonverbal: he writes that “when a meaning event occurs, the body enters language in the form of quasi-perceptual readings of the world”, and he continues to describe these non-linguistic signs as “olfactory, tactile, gustatory, aural, visual and many other subtle, nonverbal readings of the world” (Robbins 2005:824).

It is clear that an intricate connection exists between the body, human experience and the process of expressing the experiences of the body, without words as well as through the use of language.

1.2 Sociology

The influence of the French phenomenological philosophers was deeply felt within sociology as a discipline; sociology developed a rich tradition in incorporating the body and the notion of embodiment into its academic research and practices. Williams and Bendelow (1998:3) promote a sociology of embodiment that can put “mind back into bodies, bodies back into society and society back into the body”. By this they mean that sociology should take the body seriously as a basis for social order and by doing so, move away from the propensity in contemporary social theory “to theorise *about* bodies in a largely disembodied, typically male way...to a new mode of social theorising ‘*from*’ lived bodies”. The revival of interest in the body has been influenced by feminist criticism of sex and gender and by the development of queer theory. This took the spotlight away from the issue of homosexuality and instead focused on the reasons why heterosexuality is being used as an organising principle in society

and politics, and on identities that are multiple and can be combined in a variety of ways (Williams & Bendelow 1998:20). This revival is also based on the rise of the postmodern body in a culture driven by consumerism, changing demographic trends and what they refer to as “the crisis of meaning” of the body in an age of technology. Comparing the theories of Hertz and Douglas (the symbolic body) with that of Foucault (the discursive body) and Elias (the civilised body), they find that all of these theories have a passive view of the body in common, dominated by social order. They are also of the opinion that the social theory of Elias represents an advance in social constructionism by linking social and biological factors in an evolutionary way along the long process of civilisation (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 48).

In an overview of the body in sociology, Sanders (2006:279) writes that the physical body has been a metaphoric platform for the social body since the work of Spencer (1820 -1903) and that later, with the development of criminological theory (1876, 1949) the body became the focus of socio-etiological theory. He continues that the spotlight was placed on the body in the 1960s and 1970s when it became a crucial element in social life (“how people communicate through the movement and relative placement of their bodies”), while in the 1980s feminist theories impacted on the body with research on how cultural descriptions of beauty influenced the identities of women. Sociologists investigated how the body was employed or modified by occupations like prostitution, theatre, and sports; in post-modern theory, the body was viewed as a “text” that had to be “read” in “the narrative embodiment of subjectivity” (Sanders 2006:280).

Waskul and Vannini (2006:1) refer to Shilling (2003) who writes that the body has historically been something of an “absent presence” in sociology; present in the sense that it has always been at the core of “sociological imagination”, but at the same time absent in the way sociology has seldom focussed “in a sustained manner on the embodied human as an object of importance in its own right”. They continue that it appears as if the body and the embodiment of its experiences are more noticeable than in the past. They make use of the term the “bodies of symbolic interaction”, which refers to “the process by which the object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as subject-body”, asking how and in which way the body (noun) is embodied(verb) (Waskul & Vannini 2006:3). They distinguish as a matter of theory between the looking-glass body, the dramaturgical body, the phenomenological body, the socio-semiotic body, and the narrative

body (Waskul & Vannini 2006:4). The looking-glass body is about reflexivity as a condition of embodiment and how we interpret what we see when we observe the bodies of others (Waskul & Vannini 2006:5). The dramaturgical body refers to “the theatre of the body” where the body is continuously being “performed, staged and presented” and how bodies express a variety of signs through rituals and performances (Waskul & Vannini 2006:8). The authors elaborate that “thick descriptions of lived experiences” are expressed in phenomenological theories about the body and embodiment, and that these experiences are a way to create meaning in the lived contexts of people.

The body is “the fundamental corporeal anchor in the world” and in the words of Monaghan (2002), “the body’s primary relationship to the world is practical”, striving to make meaning in this world (Waskul & Vannini 2006:9). The socio-semiotic body represents the body as the basis of communication and significance; the socio-semiotic body is about the way communication happens between bodies through social interaction, and how the actions and presentations of the body open up the opportunity for others to “judge our body as object by means of appearance and performance” (Waskul & Vannini 2006:10). We also tell stories about ourselves to others, while other people “tell about their own bodies and the bodies of others” — this event of storying is expressed in the narrative body (Waskul & Vannini 2006:12). In this way the body becomes “a site of struggle between institutional discourse and counter-narratives” where symbolic interaction is employed to process traumatic events; to set abnormal bodies free from socio-cultural narratives, which have been constructed to sideline the effects of deviance, illness and diversity; and to empower people to accept themselves and others (Waskul & Vannini 2006:13).

The context of the body now is “high modernity” — a time when modern trends are radical, universal, and where modern institutions have a global reach and traditions are bypassed. Various trends have an impact on how embodiment is perceived in this time of high modernity, and includes the calculation of risk — also in the light of the AIDS epidemic; consumer bodies; class, lifestyle and social distinction; and cyberspace and digital minds. Moral danger and risk is calculated within the close conversation between social and scientific reasoning, where social discussions of risk depend on scientific evidence. Public health campaigns serve as one of the platforms where words of reasoning between the areas of sociology and science can be expressed. Williams and Bendelow (1998:71) refer to Armstrong, writing that the contemporary health paradigms focuses on “health promotions,

lifestyle and the 'green response' to ecological dangers that means that risks are located anywhere and everywhere". This has the implication that a "new regime of disease" has surfaced where "corporeal space and bodily boundaries" are recalculated. The "panic bodies" that come from the time of HIV/AIDS, and senator McCarthy, were classified as "clean or unclean" based on the purity of body fluids. These have been replaced by "flexible bodies" where immune systems are actively organised to make sense of their lives (Williams & Bendelow 1998:72).

Within the contemporary consumer culture, our relationship to goods is more and more based on driven desire than on real need. The slogan "I consume therefore I am" is a reference to how self-identity is projected against this backdrop. Greater importance is placed on the appearance and projection of the body as an integral part of self-identity. The body is attaining an exchange value and the closer it is aligned with these idealised images, the higher the value. But bodies are not passive objects. Williams and Bendelow (1998:73) see the relationship between the body and self-identity as becoming more dynamic as a result of the "growth of social reflexivity and the salience of risk". In a post-traditional society the promotion of bodily appearance is more an expression of a deeper wish "to actively control and 'construct' the body through a pluralisation of lifestyle options and choices that reflexive modernity makes possible". Within the biomedical industry bodies can be remade in line with cultural imperatives of beauty and youth. Bodies become objects that can be traded according to the latest fashion. Similarly, the fitness industry with its focus on health and discipline (which clashes with the mandate of pleasure), creates a repetitive ritual where people are trying to find meaning in "matter out of place". Here Williams and Bendelow (1998:75) refer to a term used by Crawford indicating "the displacement onto the medicalised body and the language of somatic and psychic wellbeing". Ageing, sick and disabled bodies are also "matter out of place" because they are bodies that do not function as they should; they do not conform to the values of youth and sexual attractiveness. People are then encouraged to maintain the body, not so much because of health concerns, but to nurture the youthful self. "Ageing, in short, like death itself, comes to be seen as a 'disease' in need of cure" (Williams & Bendelow 1998:76). The notion of discipline fits in with Foucault's writings where self-discipline and social control is integrated and the self is constructed through discipline in socio-political practices and technologies (Turner 2008:3).

Technology in modern society is changing the perceptions of the body — what it is, what it can become, who owns it. Williams and Bendelow (1998:80), writing nearly a decade before the inception of social networks like Facebook and Twitter, argue that technology is more and more influencing our social relationship, our self-identity and broader sense of community. We live in the age of the “cyborg” referring to “the growing imbrications of humans and machines”. The body is becoming more plastic through tissue engineering and more bionic through the advances in medical technology. New tissues are formed through the use of biodegradable plastic, seeded with cells. Titanium hips, cardiac pacemakers, electronic eyes and ear implants are making the body more bionic. The body is also becoming more engineered through new forms of gene therapy and stem cell research. Referring to Steinberg, Williams and Bendelow (1998:84) write that everything that constitutes being “human, male, female, reproductive parent, child, foetus, family, race and even population” must be renegotiated in the light of these technological developments.

Cyberspace has added a new dimension and twist to the desire to forget about the body. At the end, after any virtual experience one must return to the physical body. Williams and Bendelow (1998:88) are of the opinion that cyberspace resurrects the old Cartesian dualism. We have “real bodies, real lives, real responsibilities” located in our bodies and not in a parallel digital universe. In a virtual world, one can have an “on-line gender identity”, which is separate from real life lived in one’s body. An apt slogan is: “I am here, but I’ve left my body behind.” Williams and Bendelow (1998:86) refer to Stenger in calling this the “spring time for schizophrenia”. The change in embodiment and the loss of self is referred to as the “erotic ontology of cyberspace”. This creates new possibilities for certain groups, such as the physically disabled and terminally ill or even older people, who are often regarded as “abnormal”. Cyberspace offers an escape from the physical body and the promise of fulfilled desire, where the risk of AIDS and other diseases are minimised; however, it carries the tyranny of anonymity. Williams and Bendelow (1998:87) refer to Slouka, who regards cyberspace as a hybrid world with the “freedom to abuse and torment”, the anonymity to “torture someone’s virtual one [body]”. The virtual body, however, still remains “untouchable”.

Gibbs (2005:32) defines body image as the way we deliberately represent our bodies, also as an object of emotions and feelings, that is, whether we see ourselves as thin, fat, exhausted, and so forth. Paul Schilder (1951) unified this concept, pulling together “physiological,

psychological and social realms of bodily being” (Williams & Bendelow 1998:97). He stressed that every aspect of body image is constructed through social relations. Body image is formed in the relation between the body and the space surrounding it, which includes other bodies and objects. It is a crucial “third term” which links body and mind without reducing them to one or the other. Williams and Bendelow (1998:100) also refer to Grosz (1994), who wrote that “body image serves to unify the diverse sensations that flow through the body and to co-ordinate the individual subject’s voluntary actions in social space and time”. Body image is quite pliable because of shifting biological, social and psychological factors — there is no such thing as an isolated, complete entity. Through body image, we can distinguish between subject and object, the movement of body parts, the idea of inside and outside, active and passive, periphery and centre, as well as figure and ground (Williams & Bendelow 1998:100).

There is, however, a distinction between body image and body schema. The body continuously integrates its position and posture in the environment and this provides the necessary information for the performance of our gross motor programmes and their fine tuning (Gibbs 2005:29). Body schemas are also crucial to the way we move and to recognise who we are as unique persons. No single mechanism can, however, explain the complex, and intelligent way our bodies react in relation to the environment. An important interplay exists between body image and body schema, with research indicating that changes in the way the body performs affect the way in which people experience their bodies and influence their perception of space and external objects (Gibbs 2005:32). Sheets-Johnstone (2009:269) has great admiration for the work of Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Cole, who use the wider term “proprioception” to indicate the systems of neurologic information and experiential awareness, and who describe body image as “a complex set of intentional states”. This includes emotional attitudes, conceptual understandings and perceptual understandings. Body schema is defined as “a system of motor capacities, abilities and habits that enable movement and the maintenance of posture”.

Sheets-Johnstone (2009:13) feels very strongly that the terms “body image” and “body schema” are misleading, since they give the impression of something static and not dynamic, of a posture rather than the kinetic, something imagined, and not perceived through the senses and movement. She is inspired by the work of Alexander Luria, one of the founding fathers of neuropsychology and his description of kinetic melody. A kinetic melody describes

“inherently dynamic patterns that are at once neurological and experiential”, what is neurologically formed during the course of learning and what is experienced as a dynamic flow of movement (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:270). Kinetic melodies describe the “reality of movement” which is not captured by body image or body schema. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:344) makes the recommendation that these two concepts should rather be replaced by “corporal-kinetic intentionality” and “corporal-kinetic patterning”. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:337) writes that the foundation of corporal-kinetic patterning is “bodily-kinetic experience”. This reflects the experience that we feel and perceive through our own bodies and leads to new ways of understanding bodies in general and the emotional attitudes towards our own bodies. “The quintessential perceptual experience of one’s body — and in fact any living body — is its movement.” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:336). Corporal-kinetic patterning is linked to evolutionary life and the dynamic patterns that uphold that life; it does not reduce this life to motor programmes, but identify “the neurophysiological dynamics of corporal-kinetic intentionalities” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009: 340). She writes that “in effect, corporal kinetic intentionalities and patternings develop on the basis of kinetic motivations into a kinetic repertoire that is at once both personal and social, a repertoire of temporally constituted coordinated movements and possibilities of movement, and of ever more complex sequential activities” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:344).

Williams and Bendelow (1998:210) advocate an embodied sociology with a more integrated analytical framework linking concepts which refers to the body/self/society relationship. They also want to put the emphasis on an analytical framework which focuses on the relationship between art, the body and social theory since art “throws into critical relief the relationship between *experience* and *representation*, *aestheticism* and *eroticism*, *regulation* and *resistance*”. Such an embodied sociology should also incorporate the biological basis for the body, seeing it not as a constant, but constantly in flux and influenced by socio-cultural and material factors. It will take seriously issues like social theory and art, death, sleep, children, ageing, emotions, and pain. Williams and Bendelow (1998:213) comes to the strong conclusion that embodiment is “a common carnal bond”, which “becomes both our hope and salvation” in developing social theories and practices where the body is taken seriously.

Turner (2008:15) makes a distinction between two traditions in the sociology of the body, namely the “cultural decoding of the body as a system of meaning” which has a specific structure independent from the intentions of an individual, and the phenomenological study

of embodiment where human practices like birth, maturation, reproduction and death are studied. For the future development of a sociology of the body, there is the need to do more empirical ethnographic research and the necessity to study the performing body in art and sport. He makes the presumption that embodiment is at the heart of social life and that a renewal in a sociology of the body depends on “a theoretical integration of the connections between the vulnerability of human embodiment, the precarious nature of social institutions and human rights”.

1.3 Psychology

My own research and work as a narrative theologian (doing narrative therapy as a theologian) and the use and development of body mapping within therapy, has made me acutely aware of the intimate link between the body, the experiences of the body, the metanarratives that influence the way in which we experience and live in our bodies, and the use of language in trying to express some of these experiences. There is a close link between theory and practice, between developing certain notions about reconciliation, acceptance, forgiveness, and so forth, and the way it is expressed and experienced in the body. There is an intimate link between theology and the body. The awareness of the intimate link between body and notions of self/personhood is being explored and developed in psychology through the emergence of somatic psychology. One of the challenges arising from this deeper enquiry into the profound connection between the body and the Self is, for example, how theology could incorporate some of the notions and insights emerging from somatic psychology.

1.3.1 The emergence of somatic psychology

Barratt (2010:2) advocates the forming of a new discipline in human science called “somatic psychology” and regards bodymind therapy (a variety of healing practices) as the application of somatic psychology. He continues that the emergence of this new discipline is an indication of the far-reaching changes that are taking place as a result of our deepest understanding of what it means to be human. The Cartesian dualism which supported a problematic dichotomy between the material body and immaterial mind ruled the debate from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, and has left a marked residue even today. He writes that this dualism started breaking down in the 1950s with the advance of technology

combined with molecular biology and other related disciplines that could investigate experiential awareness and neurological events (Barratt 2010:8).

Psychology, with its roots in philosophy and in the theology of scholars like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, eventually developed into fields like cognitive behaviourism and psychoanalysis. Cognitive behaviourism focuses on the internal structures and functions of the mind that can explain behaviour. Barratt is of the opinion that this focus on cognitive structures, which regulate the body and its behaviours, is something separate and supports the Cartesian principles (Barratt 2010:13). He continues that the body is regarded as “merely the material entity” that is controlled by mental structures and external environmental circumstances and writes that it is a discipline “about” the body and not a psychology “of” the body. Psychoanalytical psychologies also sidesteps the experiences of the body with its investigation into the functioning of the ego, that is, in producing emotions and cognitions that regulate our behaviour, while balancing the demands of internal drives, the external reality, and internalised structures of the superego and ego-ideal (Barratt 2010:16). He writes that psychoanalysis has influenced the whole field of psychotherapy throughout the twentieth century and in doing so, advanced the neglect of the body and embedded the estrangement of body and mind (Barratt 2010:20). The dissention of humanistic psychology in the 1960s from cognitive behaviourism and psychoanalysis with its holistic view on personhood and creative meaning-seeking in personal growth, prepared the way for the emergence of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy, especially with its call on “experience” (Barratt 2010:62). He continues that somatic psychology is far removed from rehabilitation medicine, sport psychology and other related disciplines that “are merely *about* the body” and handle the body “in an objectivistic manner and attempt to improve its performance”. He writes that such an approach results in an “instrumental treatment of our embodiment” that continuously keeps a “conceptual-objectivistic alienation of our body” intact (Barratt 2010:94). He refers to the work of Freud, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and writes that our “embodied experience is an experience of *presence*”, which precedes any subject-object dualism or as Merleau-Ponty described it — “our fleshy incarnate subjectivity” (Barratt 2010:93). He continues that if consciousness is regarded as intentional, then our complete body is a mode of consciousness. In contrast to other disciplines, the body as subject matter determines the method of inquiry and not the other way round (Barratt 2010:96).

This emergence of somatic psychology occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s with innovative research done at the Esalen Institute and Novato Institute in California (Barratt 2010:63). He, however, does identify the beginning of somatic psychology in the pre-1914 (before the First World War) work of Sigmund Freud when he developed the notion of libidinality, which can be defined as “the erotic energetics of the living experience of our embodiment” (Barratt 2010:73). Sigmund Freud (1923) regarded psychoanalysis as “listening to the repressed unconscious dimensions of our own being-in-the-world” (Barratt 2010:75). He continues that it was clear to Freud before 1914 that a “method for listening to the voice of the repressed necessarily and foundationally entails a process of listening to the voice of our embodiment”. Freud discussed libido in a similar way to the idea of intentionality, but his notion of libidinality holds a sense of unpredictability and an uncontrollable spontaneity which is “ineluctably otherwise than the modality of mental representation” (Barratt 2010:77). He continues that libidinality is not just about sex, but about the “erogeneity of our entire body”, the “bodily otherwise” that voices our embodied-being-in-the-world. The importance of the emergence of somatic psychology is that it locates “human experience as the primary subject matter of any inquiry into the psyche and it acknowledges the primacy of embodied experience” (Barratt 2010:96).

Bodywork is the physical manipulation of the body with the aim to assist in healing it. The most prominent Western traditions are osteopathy (the manipulation of the muscular-skeletal system) and chiropractics (spinal manipulation and the effect on the nervous system), which were founded in the nineteenth century on the principles that the body is a unit; that function and structure are interrelated; that the body has the mechanisms to regulate itself; that the body has the inherent ability to repair and heal itself; that disease arises when the normal adaptability of the body is disrupted; that the movement of body fluids is crucial to its health; that nerves control these fluids; and that there are aspects of disease that are not merely the manifestation of disease (Barratt 2010:98). There is also a strong Western tradition of movement/dance therapy which is based on the principles that movement can affect the interaction between body and mind; that movement reflects personality; that there is a non-verbal reflection in the therapeutic relationship; that symbolic function is contained in movement; that the ability to improvise in movement enables the patient to experiment with new ways of being; and that movement therapy “allows for the recapitulation of early “object relationships” (the earliest interpersonal context) by virtue of their largely non-verbal nature” (Barratt 2010:101). Asian healing disciplines entered Western traditions because of the

exploration of Asian cultures through colonial imperialism in the nineteenth century, followed later by China's annexation of Tibet in 1949, when teachers in the diaspora settled in Europe and North America (Barrett 2010:103). A third wave of the influx of Asian wisdom occurred during the cultural changes in the 1960s. The impact of these influences on western psychology and psychotherapy was tremendous (Barratt 2010:105). He continues that, in general, Asian philosophies present a more holistic view of the body and the universe, whereas western ideology focuses on the supremacy of rationalism, the autonomy of the individual, as well as faith in the ideals of scientific and technological progress. In the last decades there has also been a revival in shamanism as ancient spiritual healing practice, which employs altered states of consciousness for emotional growth and healing, combined with herbological medical practices (Barratt 2010:113). Whereas transpersonal psychology has become more abstract, veering away from grounding our self and our world in embodied experience, somatic psychology embraces "our experiential embodiment as the source of all we can know" (Barratt 2010:117). He continues that embodied knowing was influenced by ancient spiritual teachings which hold that "the universe is known to be discoverable within the movements of the human body". Neuroscience (social, cognitive, affective and neurobiological) has also contributed to the mandate of somatic psychology with the insight that the neurological system has a broad adaptive flexibility/plasticity and does not function on the stagnant basis of a machine or computer (Barratt 2010:119). He writes that contemporary neuroscience has urged us to recognise the basic unity of the bodymind (Barratt 2010:123).

Barratt (2010:131) asks the important question of where our embodied experience begins and ends by exploring the notion of the boundaries of our body, which includes the controversial problem of the use of touch in psychotherapy. He defines boundaries broadly as "the codes that constitute our culture and they are often cultural specific" with some sociocultural boundaries being more permeable than others or even invisible until they are transgressed (Barratt 2010:132). These boundaries are often governed by the "notion of appropriateness" which does not function along the same distinct lines as being right/wrong or true/false, and is therefore often more harmful (Barratt 2010:134). He continues that it is often exercised by people who appoint themselves to the role of dictating to others how to conduct themselves. While it does replicate social order, it can also marginalise those who do not adhere to the tenets of this notion. He writes that "unexamined boundary-talk is an ideological trap" and one of the fundamental tasks of psychology is to examine the way in which we draw

boundaries between things, also in terms of bodily matters (Barratt 2010:135). The boundary between what is “me” and “not me” is complex with bodily experiences informing the me/not me boundary (Barratt 2010:137). He continues that this issue is made even more complex by the psychological insight that our embodiment is also experienced in fantasy, and not only through perception and movement. Fantasy modifies the experience of the body in such a way that persons can internally perceive their body quite differently to what they are objectively, for example, with eating disorders (Barratt 2010:138). He continues that in general it is proposed that “our embodied experience is confined to the limits of our proprioceptive and kinaesthetic sensations, which are then overlaid by our perceptual and conceptual presentation of the body” — in line with the importance of skin sensuality to our healthy functioning. If the body is moreover envisioned as an energy, it demands that we extend our idea of embodiment and senses beyond the boundaries of the skin (Barratt 2010:138).

1.3.2 The boundaries of the body and touch

Touch challenges the boundaries of the skin. Barratt (2010:140) relates this back to the operation of the incest taboo, which “is pervasively marked in all the reactions and responses of our embodiment. It is deeply encoded within us”. It is ironic and absurd that even when it is acknowledged that touch facilitates spiritual and emotional healing, and that healing is an ethical calling, this kind of touch is policed by society since it does not necessarily adhere to appropriate social boundaries and codes (Barratt 2010:141). He continues that while a medical doctor is allowed to touch every part of a patient’s body (with emotional dissociation), a psychotherapist can only formally shake hands, while healing is expected based on an intimate emotional engagement with the person. Barratt (2010:142) argues that a prohibition on touch actually has the potential to harm people since it propagates a mode of therapy that might estrange a person from their embodied experience. It is essential that psychotherapists have the ability and space for emotional and physical touch. Touch should be integrated into the healing practice since “the healing process touches every aspect of the patient’s being-in-the-world” (Barratt 2010:143). He continues that the conscious and unconscious attitude of the therapist is the critical factor in the healing process, an attitude that should avoid judging the thoughts, feelings, behaviour, fantasies and bodily phenomena of the patient — rather, it should facilitate the creation of a safe, free and intimate relationship with the patient in which the therapist is “fully and consistently at the service of

the patient's personal growth and in the service of the healing process". The problem of touch is then not about the "what" and "where" of touch, but the "why" of touch within the ethical framework of touching (Barratt 2010:144). He stresses that "not to touch would be an ethical lapse that perpetuates the alienation of our embodied experience". He doesn't ignore the other side, and is adamant that therapists who exploit patients do immense harm to the healing process (Barratt 2010:157). However, he maintains that somatic psychology and bodymind therapy should not serve "a culture that forces us to grow up absurd".

In her fascinating article on touch, Traina (2005:16-17) writes how gender stereotyping in cultures plays an important role in expectations created regarding touch — what is, and what is not permitted. She found that low levels of affectionate touch in the present and during childhood are more harmful to women's images of their bodies, than it is to men. Father-son touch is viewed as more suspect than mother-daughter touch; if male teachers touch students, they are suspected of being gay. In American society, the one who initiates touch is thought to exercise power and is not merely showing affection. Male patients in a hospital expressed more anxiety at being touched regularly than the female patients, possibly because it implied "unaccustomed degrees of inferiority, vulnerability and dependence". Male students, who made brief hand contact when returning their library cards, were more ambivalent about their sense of comfort than female students. Touch is often interpreted as having sexual contact. In Euro-American culture, romantic attachments form the basis for families, and this then is the only reliable source of firm touch which is socially accepted. Ironically, "the same romanticism that seems to breed this need for touch also sexualize touch and therefore increasingly forbids it" (Traina 2005:18). She writes that "good" touch is a social affirmation, communicating "I accept you" and "I affirm you" (Traina 2005:11). She maintains that children have a right to touch that is crucial for their healthy physical and psychological development and that all people have the right to the amount of touch they need for physical and psychological health, and to relieve suffering. Traina (2005:26) concludes that "we cannot experience the true happiness for which God has created us unless we do our best to receive appropriate and adequate touch. Therefore, we also have the responsibility to provide necessary touch for vulnerable others; to teach them appropriate, temperate touch; and to seek — within bounds — physical contact with others ourselves".

She continues to explore the theme of touch in her book, "Erotic attunement" (2011) and favours an interdisciplinary approach to ethics by entering into dialogue with disciplines such

as philosophy, anthropology, psychology and history. In her book she discusses the “moral meaning of maternal eroticism” and how this focus could change our portrayal of human sexual experience (Traina 2011:2). The aim of her book is to “acknowledge, embrace, and deal justly with the erotic dimensions of all human relations, especially those with unequals” (Traina 2011:6). Writing about the norms and social practices that should be appraised by their respect and support for the political, spiritual, psychological and material provisions of human flourishing, especially those of women and marginalised groups (which includes children), she states that “within very specific limits and circumstances, maternally pleasurable touch is a good and even a mandate”. She further argues that the destabilisation caused by maternity with regard to sexuality and sensual pleasure triggers a multitude of issues, wider than only the mother-infant relationship, and especially the “larger operation of all sexual and erotic dynamics of relationships between unequals” (Traina 2011:4). She continues that it deepens the questions of what children learn about physical affection and sexuality from their parents and other significant others; of what is wrong with abuse (for example incest and paedophilia), and it points out why the “obvious reaction to abuse, forbidding sensual nurture, is as destructive as abuse itself”.

She strikingly states that “our failure to distinguish sexual desire from the larger phenomenon of eroticism causes enormous harm by both perverting and unnecessarily sully by association the kinds of desire that are in fact integral to all thoughtful, generous, nurturing relationships between unequals” (Traina 2011:6). She writes that by acknowledging desire we can make certain that these relationships are just and for the good of others — this will mean that in some instances any kind of touch is forbidden, while in other cases bodily expression is allowed (Traina 2011:7). She makes the claim based on empirical research that people need to be touched by others to flourish physically, emotionally, socially and morally, and that it is a basic right the same as food and water (Traina 2011:13). She continues that the capacity for a child’s healthy attachment to an adult is a “crucial prerequisite for navigating the language of touch later in life”.

The focus on the maternal body in Traina’s work corresponds to the argument of Balsam (2012:5) that a patient will access a richer self-portrait if psychoanalysis is “more inclusive of the biological body and its development, and takes the individual’s procreative capacity into account”. She puts the emphasis on the female body and argues that even though women as characters are acknowledged in psychoanalysis, their bodies are neglected (Balsam 2012:4).

She continues that no theory of mind can be useful “without establishing the location of the body in our theories of mind”. She identifies certain trends in the historical development of women in psychoanalysis, but where the “female biological body” has been absent. She writes that there was “a chronological gradually decreasing emphasis on the bodily detail that delineates a female from a male” (Balsam 2012:176). At first there was a focus on genitalia, where the girl painfully develops into a woman with bodily pleasures as a compensation for not being a man (Balsam 2012:179). Then, in spite of the focus on the importance of maternal caretaking, the reaction of a child to the “pregnant and corporeal maternal body” was underplayed (Balsam 2012:182). Later, the emphasis on sexuality was placed on the impact of “general identificatory mother-daughter relationships”, but in a way where sexuality is kept away from any procreative function (Balsam 2012:183). At the end, “the postmodern body” viewed as “a site for control and coercion” is totally unrecognisable as a biological entity (Balsam 2012:187). She concludes that life is not possible at a distance from the body, and that she wants to show the significance of “the procreative components of the female body functioning as they exist and are perceived early in a girl’s life”, and how this focus determines the conscious and unconscious elements of the adult mind (Balsam 2012:190).

1.3.3 Embodied enquiry

The lived body thus grounds understanding by intimately participating in a world that can show new horizons and meanings...the lived body also gives to understanding the textures and aliveness of a “fleshly” world that is relevant to persons.

With these words Todres (2011:2) follows in the footsteps of Edmund Husserl, Eugene Gendlin and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who expressed the intricate relationship between the lived body, the lifeworld, and language. He continues that the relationship between the lifeworld and the lived body is portrayed by Husserl as “a pregnant world of meaning”, a world of multiple meanings that is so much ‘more than’ any construction of it, also through the use of language. Todres (2011:11) refers to Merleau-Ponty who wrote that “structures are lived rather than known and therefore can never be apprehended passively; but only by living them, assuming them and discovering their immanent significance”. Referring to the work of Husserl, Todres (2011:2) describes language as “the house of Being”, but continues that there is always a receding horizon to the lifeworld, a “more” that is beyond the known perspective. He continues to describe the lived body as a “double realm”: it experiences the “prereflective

more” of the world of which it is part texturally, and simultaneously it reflects on this experience and gives perspective to it. He defines this experiencing as “embodied understanding”, which is “a form of knowing that evokes the possibility of its living, bodily relevant textures and meanings. Todres (2011:2) differentiates between “embodied understanding” and “disembodied knowing”, where the former refers to the development of “plausible abstract models or explanations”, and the latter to a knowing which is removed from a person’s own lived possibilities. He also proposes to place emphasis on embodiment as a “remedy to a Cartesian tradition that may have overemphasised the ‘cognitive’ and the abstract dimensions of understanding” (Todres 2011:14).

Todres (2011:3) develops his notion of embodied enquiry in the areas of research methodology, psychotherapy and spirituality. Within the field of research methodology, embodied understanding is interpreted as “embodied, aesthetic experience and application” within qualitative research and not merely as a cognitive process. In the process of psychotherapy, embodied understanding unfolds when it is possible for clients to discover the freedom of experiencing themselves as “more than” the modes they have objectified and defined, and as a result are more aligned with human vulnerability. He draws amply on the work of Eugene Gendlin to illustrate “how we use more than our thoughts when we think and how the lived body is full of fertile excess, intimate with crossing and bridges, textures and relationships that are the ‘stuff’ of understanding” (Todres 2011:14). He makes the distinction between “home” and “adventure”. Todres (2011:15) refers to Husserl and Steinbeck to illustrate the tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the “home-world” and the “alien-world”. He writes that according to Husserl “to understand is to imagine, to transgress the concrete event and enter into the horizon of the world, and to find its unities for back home (Todres 2011:16). He continues that in the spirit of Heidegger, that which is seen as “alien otherness” becomes an adventure through the use of language, that one surrenders what we have embodied and in adventure “one is both excited and scared to enter the unknown...the one from home is transformed by this adventure”. This holds that the “self” is not “self-enclosed” but is open to relationships. Todres (2011:16) writes that adventures create meaning for home and in this way transform home. It “gives the perspective of distance which refreshes homecoming with people there eager for stories”. He continues that this creates understanding which is “bridge-making”. Todres (2011:17) refers to Gadamer when writing that “understanding is the linguistic happening of tradition, but the happening is such that it exceeds tradition”. He continues that for Gadamer, to understand is to understand

differently, and understanding is then “living-forward” from the past. Home includes the past and “all that it brings in body, community and meaning”, but understanding is a “living event” in the sense that it “gathers up the past and lives it forward” (Todres 2011:17). He continues that understanding then is a “linguistic reworking” of home that happens at the junction of this “carried past with already adventuring human existence”. According to him it also implies that understanding is not objective or subjective, but that “it is participatory and cannot be possessed”. Todres (2011:19) refers to Heidegger when he writes that the “said” is grounded in the “unsaid”, that being-in-the-world “transcends its forms and intrinsically exceeded linguistic capture”. His interpretation is that understanding “is always pointing quite strongly to the flow of the unsaid and its overwhelming adventurous power (Todres 2011:20). He continues that we understand when we “visit” and sometimes “suffer” the unsaid. He refers to the body as the messenger of the unsaid, describing the “productive tension” between the lifeworld and language, where “the lived body and all its connections are adequate in intersecting the ‘said’ and the ‘unsaid’”.

As mentioned, Todres was greatly influenced by the notion of embodied meaning in the work of Eugene Gendlin. Todres (2011:20) interprets Gendlin’s statement that “the body knows its situation directly” to mean that the body is the meeting place between knowing and being. Todres (2011:23) refers to Gendlin (1964) who wrote that “experiencing is the process of concrete, bodily feeling, which constitutes the basic matter of psychological and personality phenomena”. Gendlin uses the term “felt sense” to refer to bodily experiencing, which points to something that is more intentional and interactional than mere “subjective inner bodily sensations” (Todres 2011:23). He continues that Gendlin described that this “something” is not about feeling “the stuff inside”, but that it is “the sentience of what is happening in one’s living in the outside”. He considers it dangerous to “overly prioritise language and the concept that one sign endlessly continues to point to other signs”. This is where Gendlin makes an important contribution with regard to the tension in the relationship between language and bodily experiencing. Todres (2011:23) refers to Lieberman who remarks that there is a “texture of life still to be made contact with after deconstruction”. He continues that language and experience cannot be reduced or replaced by one another in the “ongoing aliveness that is understanding”, even though both experience and language are implicated in one another. The “more” is not a bunch of “essences” left unchanged by languaging (Todres 2011:23). He continues that the “more” (experiencing) is changed in interaction with language, but still “exceeds the way it is packaged”. Here he refers to Gendlin (1997) who

wrote that “the ‘more’ of bodily grounded experience is always open beyond cognitive units and is always open for further living and actions”.

Shotter (1998:33) also explores the relation between the body and language within psychology with his notion of social construction as social poetics. He cites Wittgenstein (1980) who writes that “philosophy ought only to be written as *poetic composition*”. Shotter continues that humans as “living, embodied beings” are involved with the world around them and cannot be indifferent to the shapes, smells, sounds and movements from others “or an otherness outside of ourselves at work within us”. Language is a refinement of deeds and that means that what we did earlier (bodily, responsively and without thinking) manifests later (individually, cognitively and deliberately). The dilemma within the practice of human and behavioural sciences is that this earlier, immediate and bodily reactions remains hidden (Shotter 1998:34). The challenge for professionals is to become aware of these relations, to embody new relational ways and to change their “sensibilities”. The practice of social poetics is “this emphasis on the living, embodied, gestural aspect of people’s social practices, and the direct and immediate, sensuous response that they call out of us” which in turn give us a hint of how these “non-informational, “poetic” events” open venues to new, unfamiliar worlds (Shotter 1998:44). This requires an attunement to the things that often happen right before us, but remains unnoticed and finding the connections and relations that they actually have in people’s lives (Shotter 1998:47). He continues that the aim of social poetics is “to articulate the nature of the relational practices involved in investigating these fleeting, momentary, responsive meanings. As humans we might try to hide what we experience in our inner lives, but the surprise is that we exhibit them “in the unfolding “movement” of our living out our lives, responsively, amongst others” (Shotter 1998:49).

Gendlin gives primacy to the lived body (Todres 2011:33). He continues that this means that the “lived body” is a source of meaningful understanding, that there is a level of knowing that exists prior to symbolisation. This primary source of knowing is “the intimate inhabiting of that which the lived body experiences in its interaction with its world” with which it also gives meaning and possibility to language. He continues that this level of knowing is often taken for granted, because it is prereflective. Todres (2011:33) writes that this prereflective knowing encompasses understanding, but it is “not yet separated into the discrete forms of ‘this’ and ‘that’ within which language works”. He continues that it is a responsive and intimate knowing which is sensed as a whole and “serves as a meaningful reference for

words”. Todres (2011:33) writes that the involvement of the body is a “minority voice in postmodern dialogue”, especially in contrast to the overemphasis on language. He continues that this is where Gendlin reminds us that “the body is intimately implicated in what things mean in that we live meanings through bodily participation in the world”. It can also happen that “the language of what things mean changes bodily experience” and where language and lived body is an ongoing process — embodying language; languaging the body (Todres 2011:34). Importantly, Todres (2011:35) writes that it is an illusion to think that a person can construct new realities or different ways of language in ignoring “how we find ourselves in body, time, interpersonal context, and place”. He continues to summarise Gendlin’s influence, writing that “bodily interactions function in language”; that the rejection of a modernist’s approach to truth should not lead to arbitrariness, but to “a more intricate understanding”, and that the flow of embodied understanding provides a counter-point to the “logic order” of abstract principles. In this way the lived body makes “authentic sense of language and connects such language to an embodied world of meanings”, and does not only rely on “logical, intersubjective agreement” (Todres 2011:42).

1.3.3.1 Embodied understanding in qualitative research

Embodied understanding in qualitative research requires a certain responsibility from the co-researcher, the interviewer, the analyst and the reader. The co-researchers are not only informants of what they are saying, but they also become practitioners of the way in which they find words that “work” (Todres 2011:37). He continues that their lived bodies become the medium to communicate their participation in situations in a way which is “sensorially intimate enough to ‘be in touch with’ and ‘be faithful to’ the intricacy of experiential situations in their ‘preseparated multiplicity’”. This kind of “focussing” requires that we pay attention to the words we say in order to find out, not only whether they are logical, but whether they are responsive as well. He continues that “such responsiveness is an experience in which language is most alive in awakening the sense of presence of what it is referring to”. When this happens, it opens up new ways of talking that “comes from this sense of aliveness of the phenomenon” (Todres 2011:37).

The interviewer should not allow that his social circumstances as the “demanding other” become a diversion in the process (Todres 2011:38). He continues that the interviewer should be interested in how the words work interactively between them. The interviewer is a listener

who is focussed on understanding an embodied experience since words are “a bodily lived experience”. This kind of focussed listening opens the possibility of “some degree of interembodied experience” (Todres 2011:39). The co-researcher’s words not only deepen the understanding of the interviewer, but also awaken some “lived” sense of the co-researcher’s experience. He continues to describe this as a gradual experience where “the experience of sense-making in me happens” as momentum is gained. The words of the co-researcher open up a “something ‘more’ that involves a bodily sense of being present to a whole situation”. This kind of interembodied understanding provides the co-researcher an ongoing ability to bring “sense” to language. Todres (2011:39) writes that “such freshness of meanings can again be experienced as ‘making sense’” by both the co-researcher and the interviewer and it is the lived body that “provides the intimacy needed for knowledge as a meaningful practice”. This kind of interembodied understanding is a fertile source for analysis and writing. Todres (2011:40) writes that at the beginning of analysis the researcher should get a “sense of the whole” since this makes certain that “details are not just merely accurate but rather, meaningful within their context”. He continues that in analysis “the separation of language and the non-separated ‘more’ of bodily-contextual-intimacy are utilised as sources of ongoing authentic understanding”.

Through analysis and writing, this understanding is “carried forward” into a public space, but where embodied understanding is “a source of accountability for whether the words are working”. The readers as well as the co-researchers can then judge “the extent to which my resolution of tension” is affecting them (Todres 2011:41). He continues that there is a growing sense of understanding where the reader not only has access to ideas, principles and conclusions, but is “intuitively empowered through the words to engage with the phenomenon in a more direct and personal way”. He argues that this engagement is necessary in the process of understanding since “we participate in understanding in personal ways that are more complex than outcomes and conclusions of theoretical explanation”. The way in which an analysis is presented, where a phenomenon is described with a focus on texture “by articulating the phenomenon as a narrative movement that was embodied by a person in a concrete situation”, enables the reader to experience the phenomenon in a more ‘enacted’ manner (Todres 2011:57). He continues that such textural descriptions are more aimed at “practical knowledge, that is, knowledge for action” and that the reader then comes to understand the particular phenomenon in a more intuitive way.

1.3.3.2 Embodied understanding in psychotherapy

Todres (2011:73) argues that there is a danger of depersonalisation within a natural-scientific world-view and a technological culture. A methodological approach that takes embodied understanding seriously, endeavours to find a language that “is full of human participation and that allows us as human beings to intuitively share in the phenomena described (Todres 2011:74). He continues that it focuses on the individual person as a departure point in human science and “remembers the freedom of the unique human occasion by expressing essences and themes, not as final and conclusive law-like absolutes”. He continues that the relevance of this approach for psychotherapy is that it encourages playfulness in exploring and learning with both the head and heart, without knowing beforehand how things will develop. Todres (2011:74) writes that “the nature of discovering/creating as emotionally meaningful narrative is such that it reveals the future of possibilities” and that through “sense-making”, hope and self-forgiveness a client “moves back towards being grounded in the concrete details of her/his life”. These details form part of a “patterned, meaningful story”, and enable clients to make sense of many things (Todres 2011:108). He continues that there is “a personal narrative at work that makes sense of personal identity” within a network of relationships and the concrete context of their culture, life-world, God or the search for a higher purpose and that it increases a sense of personal agency. He continues that it also increases a sense of freedom experienced as “being more than”— “what I had previously thought and felt...what I had said up till now...any premature judgement of myself...any ‘thing’ of self-enclosed entity that reacts to forces and causes”. Todres (2011:184) writes that an embodied understanding in psychotherapy supports a grounded, and at the same time flexible sense of personal identity. He cites Gendlin (1996) who wrote that “compared to what we usually think and feel, what comes from the bodily sensed edge of awareness is characteristically more intricate and multifaceted, and yet also more open to new possibilities. We are not bound by the forms of the past, but contrary to what is often said today, we cannot ‘construct’ just any narrative we like either”.

Todres (2011:110) writes that humans are rooted in great vulnerability and great freedom. He refers to this as the “soulful space” of being human and describes this ambiguity as “the essence of a human kind of openness”. Todres (2011:112) refers to the Zollikon Seminars of Heidegger when he talks about “a ‘clearing’ that makes all things possible”, where space and time are not “independent variables” into which the existence of humans are forced, but that

space and time “are themselves shaped from the events in the clearing in which human existence intimately participates”. He continues that for Heidegger, spatiality is structured as the “possible ‘free and open’ into which things can come”; temporality is envisioned as “the possible then, now, and not yet which carries both continuity and discontinuity”; embodiment “as a ‘bodying forth’ of ways of being”; and discourse (language) is structured as “the medium by which all things disclose themselves as something and interact in some”. Todres (2011:113) describes the essential source of human freedom as the “opening power that is enacted by his/her embodied perceptions and actions”. He continues that this is a kind of freedom that “co-participates in the event of being”, a freedom that conceals and reveals, a freedom that “gives room to perceptions and meanings”. Crucially he writes that it is not an absolute freedom as if everything is dependent on an individual’s consciousness, as if there is no “otherness”. He continues that this kind of freedom is occupied by concerns regarding this “otherness”, and by “one’s own situated and embodied existence” — that it is essentially “an opening that has ‘care’ as its nature”.

It is a kind of freedom that is “wounded” and has “a certain quality of aloneness in it” (Todres 2011:115). He writes that there is a profound vulnerability in human existence and the source of this vulnerability lies in “human beings’ openness to the world to receive-perceive” (Todres 2011:116). He continues that Heidegger characterised this as “care”, where “human existence is essentially concerned about itself, other people, and things in the world”. He strikingly continues that this care is “incarnate in our flesh and shapes the ways that things come to us”. Todres (2011:117) writes that his metaphor of “soulful space” is “the intertwining of freedom and vulnerability” and that human’s existential task is that of embodying openness and vulnerability, where the “wound” becomes an opening to new possibilities. He continues and once again refers to Gendlin who calls this vulnerable openness the “life forward direction”, which is “a leaning towards the life that is not yet, and the ‘newness’ of being touched by an aliveness that always includes the possibility of pain”. It is a hunger for “the freshness of what presents itself”. Todres (2011:118) writes that this requires a self that is “never self-enclosed” and “is always in the openness of relationships”, a “self” from home that is transformed by the adventure of life. It is in living forward that “we carry the given freedom of ‘more than’ any objectification of ourselves and others” and “carry the given vulnerabilities of situatedness and finitude” (Todres 2011:119).

Within “experiential-existential” psychotherapy, the focus is on the therapist’s own awareness of “freedom-wound” that allows him/her “to be a place of welcome and permission” and the ability of the therapist “to honour and facilitate the client’s experiential process” (Todres 2011:121). He continues to point out the enormous influence of Gendlin’s philosophy of implicit entry, where Gendlin explained “how we are bodily in situations, and how we bodily know in ways that exceed any precise formulation or patterning of it” through language. It is a place where meanings “can be felt before they are thought”. He continues that Gendlin’s practice of focusing “involves attending to a ‘felt-sense’ that is bodily grounded”. Todres (2011:122) writes that this “felt-sense” can include an emotional attunement, but is more than that. He continues that “the bodily felt-sense functions as the background knowing of a situation-for-one-as-a-whole”. This requires that attention should be paid to the body and to “the *meanings* implicit in such ‘felt-sense’” and in making these implicit meanings explicit through language. In psychotherapy these implicit meanings felt in the body are important since it is “the place where fixed meanings are carried, the potential repetition of the past” and it is also the place “where ‘finding-oneself-in-relation’ is potentially larger than these fixed meanings” (Todres 2011:122). He continues that in “the ‘more’ of one’s bodily ‘felt-sense’, one finds both wound and freedom, embodied history and being ‘more than’”. This gives a gift of personal agency to the client with the freedom of “being more than” and it gives a “greater degree of self-acceptance...with the common vulnerabilities of an embodied human life”. Todres (2011:123) writes that the therapist acts as guide and companion to the client, being aware of how they themselves “find words that carry forward presence” and how they embody and language their service, guiding clients through the adventure of “the experiencing of his/her capacity to take up and ‘live forward’ new meanings, fresh perceptions, and engagements”.

1.3.3.3 Embodied understanding in spirituality

“Spirituality is experienced *through* the body, rather than without the body” (Todres 2011:185). The lived body is a gate to spirituality. This description of Todres is at odds with the dominant forms of Christian spirituality in the Western world, and could only serve to enrich the thoughts and practices of Christian spirituality. He continues that even though spirituality relates to aspects beyond the self, spirituality is paradoxically directed at the lived body. He writes that “a spirituality informed by embodied enquiry is interested in an incarnate spirituality and the ways in which one’s broadest contexts can be embodied and

embraced in living a human life". An embodied spirituality is not primarily interpreted as "an integrated framework of direct beliefs about ultimate concerns and one's meaning and purpose in the universe" (Todres 2011:184). The interpretations of spirituality experienced in everyday life "are grounded by the palpable lived experience of meeting a mystery that is always in excess of the known" (Todres 2011:185). He continues that the lived body is not "merely a skin-encapsulated object", but is a subjectivity that is "intimately intertwined with what is there beyond the skin". The body is part of the world and a view on the world and our comprehension of broader contexts is deeply felt in the lived body "before it is separated into thought-patterns by the distant categories of thought" (Todres 2011:185). He continues that someone may have an awareness of a mystery beyond what is known, but through the lived body, this mystery is palpably experienced in a manner that is tranquil, with warmth and a feeling of being alive. In this way, an embodied spirituality "lets the living dimension of mystery live as mystery, without reducing it to categories of thought". Todres (2011:186) concludes that "the embrace of the body gives such mystery not its knowability, but a feeling of its palpability".

His view on embodied understanding and spirituality is supported by Barratt (2010:174) who writes that return to the awareness of our embodied experience is in essence a spiritual practice, a process which is facilitated by somatic psychology and bodymind therapies. He continues that somatic psychology can be enormously enriched by the "the teachings of those mystical traditions that hold the universe to unfold within the body". He argues that somatic psychology deconstructs the traditional dichotomy between the secular and the sacred and in doing so, contributes to a secular spirituality as a non-theistic spiritual practice (Barratt 2010:177). It is a spirituality with an "ethical-existential practice" which Barratt (2010: 178-179) describes with the three coordinates of love (as a communication of energies between persons and between a person and the universe); freedom ("the potential for awareness of the multiplicity of communications within the experience of our own embodiment" and to know the inner wildness of our embodied experience) and joy (the authentic happiness inherent to the process of awareness).

Todres (2011:125) describes human embodiment as the "integrating 'place' where both human vulnerability and spiritual freedom can happen". He continues that the mature Heidegger wrote about human existence that cannot be separated from a wider spiritual context. Todres (2011:130) refers to Heidegger when he writes about the rhythm of human

identity. He continues that “in living a human life we ‘become someone’ and live the rhythm of self-sameness and otherness”, where there is the aspect within this rhythm of “a present self to uphold or a future self to attain”. He makes the claim that there exists “a nourishment to a rhythm of self-finding and self-losing”, with the two movements supporting each other (Todres 2011:131). There is a wholeness in human identity that cannot be lost or gained and the problem for Todres (2011:132) lies in the relationship between “our wholeness and our committed self-assertion and expression”, the search for an “objectified self”. He continues that “committed self-expression” is crucial to human existence and that “resistance to a fully human incarnated life in which we are historically and interpersonally situated results in fundamental dishonesty”, a pattern of non-commitment in an attempt “to avoid being someone unique and specific”.

On the other hand, Todres (2011:133) describes a “global sense of meaningless and deadness”, a syndrome which holds a lack of vitality “that is inherent in the excessive objectifying of self and other”. That is why he is looking for “a mutually inclusive relationship” between self-finding and self-losing. Spiritual freedom for him is the freedom from the necessity to objectify self, others and the world (Todres 2011:140). This direction of freeing self-understanding from objectification is defined as “liberal self-insight” (Todres 2011:142). He approached this “liberal self-insight” from the Zen tradition where there is a shift in self-identity, and the emptiness of self is emphasised (Todres 2011:143). Liberal self-insight becomes tacit understanding in psychotherapy when “new, less fixed possibilities for self are seen”, and in spiritual awakening when “no-self is experienced” (Todres 2011:149). “Tacit understanding” refers to the notion where an insight is integrated into a person’s “everyday thoughts, feelings and actions” and according to Merleau-Ponty “an ongoing participation in which constant living adjustments are made”, even before it is understood (Todres 2011:145). He continues that we learn as we participate in life, and “the known...is in constant dialogue with the surprise and unknowing”.

Todres (2011:150) writes that an embodied spirituality should embrace both freedom and vulnerability. He illustrates human vulnerability as an existential given with the words of a song of Leonard Cohen (1992): “there is a crack, a crack in everything, it’s how the light gets in”. He continues that the “gift of wound” is a freedom for vulnerability. He makes use of the myth of Narcissus to indicate how it can be “expressed in more phenomenological and ‘experience-near’ ways” and to “articulate the phenomenon of ‘soulful space’ as an authentic

response to narcissism” (Todres 2011:152). The myth of Narcissus for Todres (2011:153) illustrates how someone with beauty and potential is “not being carried forward into the richness and possibilities of relational life”. Writing about the wound of longing that accompanies vulnerability, Todres (2011:154) says that there is “simply a vulnerability” in human existence before it changed into a sense of deficiency and shame. He continues that there is a “felt vulnerability of need and incompleteness, of wanting; a sense of something missing, and a stretching towards what may come”, a longing that comes with vulnerability, “as if our body knew its heart’s desire”. Some psychoanalysts have linked this missing connectedness to the “oneness with mother” and as an effort to re-experience this lack of connectedness with the “primary attachment” (Todres 2011:155). He however continues to write that the feeling of connectedness “that the body seems to know may be implicitly right here and now in the flow of relational life” and writes that when we admit longing and vulnerability the self “may be open, flowing and dynamic” and that there “is less a sense of repetition, more novelty, and less preoccupation with the boundary that says: ‘I am this only’”. He continues to describe the implications of the refusal to acknowledge the wound of longing and vulnerability. He refers to this denial as a “self-contraction” which makes it difficult for a person to again get involved in “intimate relational life”. One implication of this refusal is hatred of the feelings of vulnerability and longing, self-hate and shame. The person regards him-/herself as weak, pathetic, defective, violated and exposed and regards themselves as something that must be changed and a problem to be solved (Todres 2011:156). He continues that another implication is an “addiction to the feeling of self-sufficiency” with the person attempting to pretend that he/she does not need anyone else. This leads to a construct where the person sees him-/herself as special, strong and good and to be less than this construct of specialness, is tantamount to failure. Todres (2011:157) writes that such a person then tries to get others to uphold this construct and needs to be admired.

1.3.3.4 The existential approach of Eugene Gendlin

Todres (2011:160) refers to Gendlin who had reservations about the manner in which cultural discourse on narcissism has developed. In Gendlin’s concept of “life forward” direction, human identity and desire are seen as unfinished with an awareness of the body that senses what is required next. In his existential approach there is no final contents to be realised (Todres 2011:161). He continues that the body senses a wholeness which is not final, but which is open and fertile, longing for what is still possible. He beautifully writes that “the

body knows intimately the taste of unfinishedness, and even more, of separation, being-torn, and longing. And the body recognises the taste of wholeness...of being continues with something much greater". Todres (2011:162) writes that in his metaphor of "soulful space" (used for the notion of freedom and wounded vulnerability) vulnerability is embraced with a willingness "to 'wear' and 'move' within the vulnerabilities of this human realm". He continues that "living forward" entails "separations and bindings, so there is also pain — a beautiful pain in living forward, and in giving up what we have embodied".

Todres (2011:175) summarises the four constituents of embodied enquiry as a practice attuned to languaging and the experiencing body. Words are not only technical, but human because of its aesthetic quality and words work when they are felt in the body as a gratifying experience (Todres 2011:176). He continues that "the happenings of the lifeworld were full of texture and our own intimate and nuanced responsiveness to these happenings". Embodied enquiry also marries thought and feeling. Our relation with our lifeworld, with time, space, people and our bodies is part of our feelings and constitutes "a holistic and immediate way of knowing" (Todres 2011:177). Embodied enquiry is open to what is new and creative and not dependent on thought alone. Our lifeworld exceeds patterns captured by thought and language alone. A heritage of our Cartesian tradition is that we prematurely analyse and make abstracts because "this is what words do" (Todres 2011:178). In contrast, it is the "lived body as it holistically participates in its living, feeling and moving that provides the experiential ground of what any words are about" (Todres 2011:179). He continues that it is the lived body that sense the "more" of the lifeworld. Referring to the philosophy of entry into the implicit by Gendlin, Todres (2011:180) writes that it is a body-based hermeneutics in which qualitative meanings are pursued by a back and forth movement between words and their felt complexity in the lived body. Embodied enquiry is humanising since it undermines "a world that too easily objectifies self and other". Todres (2011:181) writes that embodied enquiry endeavours to "balance historical, national, religious and ethnic identities with a sense of common humanity underlying these identities". Embodied enquiry does not totalise or objectify self and other essentially, and an openness to embodied enquiry is only possible because "of a greater 'nourishment' from the lifeworld" where "nourishment" is defined as "empathetic aliveness that comes when looking at self, other, and [the] world afresh" (Todres 2011: 181).

Barratt (2010:186) also refers to Gendlin's method of "focussing" as an effort to translate "the inner cues of bodily experience" into verbal formations. He writes this method works on the premise that "messages from the somatic semiotic domain" can be brought to the reflective consciousness through verbal symbols (Barratt 2010:187). He describes "somatic semiotic" as the domain where the "meaningfulness of bodily awareness" happens. The awareness to which somatic psychology refers is also called primary consciousness and the distinction is made between this kind of awareness and symbolic language (Barratt 2010:185). He continues that the argument is that it is extremely difficult to translate primary consciousness into words without a considerable loss of meaningfulness and that this kind of awareness attends to signs rather than symbols, where signs do not employ the triadic structure of symbols (a word or symbol attains meaning in relation to at least two other words or symbols). There are two opposing arguments — the first assumes that the system of reflective consciousness (which employs language) is open, but has "somehow *lost track of* the messages of embodied experience", while the other argues that "the narrations of representationality are ideologically structured as to *block*, avoid or obfuscate, the communications of our embodiment" (Barratt 2010:187).

Barratt is uncertain whether a method like Gendlin's "focussing" is indeed possible since the question is whether one can "truly express the voice of embodied experience in language" especially if language is constructed to alienate the embodied experience (Barratt 2010:188). He argues that the extension of reflective awareness should be "a configurative labour of calculated reasoning about "what the body wants to say" and that is not anymore about a mental conceptualisation of the body, but about the challenge of "getting "out of our heads" and "into our bodies" and in doing so, deconstructing the oppressive features of living in our heads (Barratt 2010:188). He writes that "the communications of our embodiment" can only be accessed indirectly through healing practices with a playful aspect (Barratt 2010:189). He continues that the history of the westernised world "is one of an escalating alienation from the processes of embodied awareness" and that the mandate of somatic psychology and bodymind therapies is to open "our awareness of the wisdom of our embodiment" and in doing so, to "return to a sense of belonging with our bodies" (Barratt 2010:19).

1.4 The body in narrative therapy

The research in this section is not only based on an interdisciplinary literature exploration of the body, but also on my own work and research as a narrative theologian/therapist in the context of a (therapy) practice (Bodytheology n.d.). My work and research as narrative theologian predominantly involves white, Afrikaans and English speaking South African clients and co-researchers. There is a close fit between this work and the development of the new field of somatic psychology, which I only discovered after I had incorporated and adjusted body mapping into narrative therapy.

1.4.1 The narrative metaphor

Narrative therapy is based on the work of, among others Michael White, and, after him, Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, who published their findings in their book *Narrative Therapy. The social construction of preferred realities* (1996). Freedman and Combs (1996:15) write that Michael White saw in the narrative metaphor the story as a map that extends through time. They refer to White and Epston who wrote that people arrange their experience of events in sequence across time in an effort to make sense of life (Freedman & Combs 1996:31). They strikingly write:

Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are lived by stories of our race and place. Whatever culture we belong to, its narratives have influenced us to ascribe certain meanings to particular life events and to treat others as relatively meaningless. Each remembered event constitutes a story which together with our stories constitute a life narrative, and, experientially speaking, our life narrative is our life (Freedman & Combs 1996:32).

They are very curious about the “local knowledge” of each person they encounter. Each person’s story is unique and they try to encourage people “to celebrate their differences and to develop and perform narratives that they prefer around the particularities of their lives” (Freedman & Combs 1996:33). Demasure and Müller (2006:410) speak of the narrative turn in pastoral care which came about with the hermeneutic model, moving away from the therapeutic model of the 1980s. With this move, the pastoral domain was seen as centering around meaning and according to them, meaning is expressed in stories. Demasure and Müller (2006:411) refer to the hermeneutics of P. Ricoeur who explores narrativity through prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. Stories are mainly about actions; according to

Demasure and Müller (2006:412), a refiguration in relation to a story leads not only to a redescription of reality, but also to a change in the reader's actions. They also refer to the importance of metaphors which can inspire actions and write that new or surprising metaphors have the potential to redescribe reality. Unlike a story this does not happen on the level of action, but on "the level of feeling, of values and of beauty".

Michael White (2011:3) writes that in engaging with the narrative metaphor, he has realised how important it is to "decenter" the therapist's voice and to bring the voices and living skills of clients into the center. He continues that this contribute "to the rich description of these knowledges and skills that have been generated in the histories of people's lives". The narrative metaphor gives ample space for the development of practices that are "non-normative"; practices that do not unquestionably reproduce and simply reinforce the norms of mainstream culture. Through the "re-authoring" of conversations people can attach new meaning to events that have been neglected in the past and to connect these with "other events of their lives in sequence that unfold through time according to alternative themes... the counter plots of their lives" (White 2011:6). The unpacking of narratives is a way to deconstruct negative identities linked to cultural stories, but it also opens the way of thinking and living about these stories, "the historical and cultural ways of being in the world and thinking about the world that these stories are bearers of" (White 1998:8).

1.4.2 Insights as a narrative theologian/therapist

One of the profound influences on my formation as theologian is the work of James B. Nelson who maintains that body theology begins with what is concrete, "with the many big and little birthing and dyings we encounter daily". It doesn't start with doctrines about God and humanity, but "begins with the bodily expressions of life" (Nelson 1988:17). For me this implies that the starting point of a theology of the body is the concrete, physical body of a person and the experiences of that particular body which should be explored in a specific context. This also ties in with the tenets of a postfoundationalist theology. Müller (2008:4) writes that in a postfoundationalist approach, one must listen to the stories of people in real-life situations. It is a way of thinking that is concrete and local. Contextuality is a key concept. At the same time, it should reach "beyond local contexts to transdisciplinary concerns". This then is the motivation for me as a narrative theologian/therapist to listen to the stories of people as expressed through their bodies. I listen carefully to the way they talk

about their bodies, and how, through their bodies, they experience their faith and religious life. As part of therapy, I sometime use body mapping as a way of storytelling and in a sense, to give the body a voice.



Solomon (2007:2-3) describes body mapping as a way of telling stories and making art about a person and his/her life. It provides “a better understanding of themselves, their bodies and the world they live in”. She describes body mapping as a tool to be used in a healing way, in helping people to remember things, in finding answers to problems, but primarily in allowing people to tell their stories. The Memory Box Project at the University of Cape Town started running Memory Box workshops in Khayelitsha in 2002 (Bodymaps n.d.). Memory work is used with people who have HIV/AIDS, and serves to help them prepare for their own deaths and leave their story behind for their children. In these workshops, facilitators discovered that people, who were undergoing ART (anti-retroviral therapy) treatment were more future orientated, and less inclined to look at the past. A large group of people had begun to draw their life stories, hoping to live longer. Flowing from this discovery, Jonathan Morgan and Jane Solomon developed the body mapping process. A body mapping workshop was facilitated in collaboration with CATIE (Canadian Aids Treatment Information Exchange) in October 2006 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and another one was held in March 2007 in Lusaka, Zambia. In August 2008, CATIE facilitated two body mapping workshops in Toronto, Canada. The first workshop was held with ten African/Caribbean women, while the second one involved a group of seven men. All this resulted in a facilitator’s manual on body mapping, “Living with X”, written by Jane Solomon, with psychosocial input by Jonathan Morgan.

Brett-MacLean (2009:741) suggested that the body mapping process could have other applications, for example, for people with eating disorders or people living with chronic pain. This article made me curious to explore the possibility of using body mapping in my work as narrative theologian. Another research project was centred on the question of how people make sense of physical trauma through their experience of body mapping (Meyburgh 2006:6). She focussed on the experiences of the body mapping process of two men who were held in jail and tortured for their political activities during apartheid (Meyburgh 2006:II). The research confirmed that body mapping could be applied wider than what its initial focus had been, namely people living with HIV/AIDS. Meyburgh (2006:19) refers to body mapping being used with victims of apartheid crimes shortly after the completion of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as body maps painted by San artists of the Kalahari as part of a poverty alleviation project. As far as I am aware, it has not yet been used within a theological context.

Flowing from the use of body mapping as a narrative tool during counselling and a series of interviews, I developed the following insights:

- A dominant theme that surfaced was around the issue of acceptance and rejection. The majority of my clients grew up in a Protestant tradition. In spite of an awareness of grace and of a new status in Christ, acceptance was not viewed in that light. Acceptance is qualified by how one is perceived by others and by oneself. Some clients projected the lack of acceptance, that is, rejection, as a rejection by God or qualified God's acceptance of them. This qualified acceptance is sustained by powerful metadiscourses with regards to sin; what it means to be a good Christian; dying in yourself for God's kingdom; concepts of heaven and hell resulting in strong feelings of guilt; and, lastly, metadiscourses regarding sexuality and bodiliness. This in turn manifested in the body by way of eating disorders, stress, sexually alienating behaviour, and dissociation from the body. It is not easy to simply accept that we are accepted.
- Experiences of rejection were also linked to extremely dominant metadiscourses of what it means to be a good wife, a good mother, a pretty woman, an attractive man, the typical male. The language of these metadiscourses is grounded in that of patriarchal heterosexism. My impression is that it causes a lot of anxiety and confusion about a person's identity. This once again manifested in eating disorders,

stress and body-alienation. It also has a deep impact on the relationships of some clients, ending in divorce or not allowing people to get too close physically and emotionally. These same patriarchal heterosexist metadiscourses had an almost unbreakable hold on male and female clients' image of God as purely male.

- Isherwood and Stuart (1998:96) write about the epistemology of the flesh as body knowledge: "The body is experienced as a source and site of knowledge whose voice can break through the epistemology of oppression." I think this can tie in with the concept of the implicit memory of the body and using a therapy such as body mapping as a way to unlock these implicit memories, giving the body a "voice". I do think that body mapping can give voice to, for example, stories of oppression and I was amazed at the amount of metadiscourses uncovered in the body mapping process. This can lead to a deeper exploration of these metadiscourses with "conventional" narrative therapy to try and plot the most dominant story and look for unique outcomes. I also found that the body mapping process is extremely rich in metaphors. In evaluating the body mapping process, participants mentioned that they experienced their body maps as being a portrayal of them, making it easier to talk about their bodies and the stories of their bodies. The body map is a graphic illustration of how the body stores its stories. There are so many stories written on our bodies. Morgan (2000:15) writes that the key question for narrative therapists is how to help people break from thin conclusions about these stories and to re-author new, preferred stories.
- More comprehension is needed with regard to the oppression of bodies. Isherwood and Stuart (1998:99-100) write that many people experienced their bodies "as a source and site of resistance against terror and tyranny, for body knowledge trespasses over all sorts of boundaries including the boundaries established by traditional academic theology....and the boundaries of hetero-patriarchy". It is therefore inevitable in a society which devaluates the body that the body should become a site of resistance. Clients mentioned that through their body maps, they became more aware of the spiritual and sexual dualisms in society, and how they experienced healing throughout the body mapping process. A female client talked about the stress she experiences when her body is treated as an object. Many clients had a sense that they were "okay" when looking at their body maps, experiencing *a fragile sense of acceptance*. My impression then is that body mapping is a powerful medium to create awareness regarding the dualisms and metadiscourses in society, and that it can be

used to facilitate a process of body integration, overcoming various forms of oppression.

Martha Horn (2005:81) and others developed the Embodied Spirituality Scale (ESS). This is an instrument designed “to measure the level of integration between one’s experience of sexuality and spirituality”. The results of these studies supported “the concept of embodied spirituality as an integral relationship between sexuality and spirituality”. These studies were developed as a result of the change in perception brought by body theology, seeing sexuality as an integral and holistic part of human experience.

In summary, I would suggest that stories of oppression are written on the bodies of many people. These stories are grounded in dominant hetero-patriarchal and colonial metadiscourses, as well as metadiscourses based on a soul/body dualism. Organised religion has often contributed in maintaining and enriching these stories, whether it is about race, gender, sex, ethnicity, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, conscience, belief or culture.

1.5 Paleoanthropology and anthropology

Philosophy provided a natural starting point for disciplines such as sociology and psychology to enquire how the body and the experiences of the body have developed in these disciplines and how new ways of interpretation can be explored. This deeper enquiry into the body/embodiment cannot be restricted to social sciences and humanities — natural sciences, such as paleoanthropology, cognitive science, and molecular biology should also embrace the challenge of exploring the body and the notion of embodiment.

1.5.1 Paleoanthropology

In his book “Alone in the world?”, Wentzel van Huyssteen (2006a) explores the interdisciplinary problem of “what makes us human”, and the way in which human uniqueness correlates with human origins and religious awareness. In an attempt to address this problem, he enters into conversation with paleoanthropology and archaeology. Van Huyssteen regards the paleolithic cave paintings in South West France and the Basque country as spectacular evidence of symbolic behaviour in humans. Van Huyssteen (2010a:146) refers to Roger Lewin (1993), who sees language, self-awareness, imagination,

consciousness, moral awareness, symbolic behaviour, and mythology as the elements that define what makes us human. These elements are most often absent in the prehistoric record and that is why paleoanthropologists focus on indirect, plausible pointers, such as these caves, to explore evidence of the symbolic in the human mind. Van Huyssteen (2010a:148) cites the work of scientists like Mithen; Noble and Davidson; Donald; and Tattersal and Deacon and writes that a common understanding has emerged, namely “that human mental life included biologically unprecedented ways of experiencing and understanding the world, from aesthetic experiences to spiritual contemplation”. Paleoanthropology sees human uniqueness as highly contextualised and embodied. This notion ties in directly with the “embodied, symbolizing minds” of prehistoric people, and it manifested in the painted cave walls of the Upper-Palaeolithic period, around 35 000 years ago. He also refers to the work of Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams (1998) who argue for a shamanistic interpretation of Palaeolithic imagery. Van Huyssteen (2010a:148) writes that every culture has rich spiritual and religious traditions. He continues that human brains have been reorganised in response to language (“the co-evolution of language and brain”), and implies that religious and spiritual development must be viewed with religious imagination as an integrated part of human cognition that cannot be separated from other cognitive functions.

In her acclaimed series of three books, called the “Roots” series (1990, 1994, 2008), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone developed a “hermeneutics of the human body”, emphasising the human body’s crucial role in the interplay of meaning, mind and understanding (Van Huyssteen 2010b:332). She argues that the difference between humans and other animals is a matter of degree and not of kind. Linking philosophy with the science of paleoanthropology and writing about evolutionary theory, Sheets-Johnstone (2009:133) maintains that we do not need a different conception of nonhuman animals, but a different conception of ourselves. When we view ourselves as primates, it opens the direction to acknowledge that we have “our own species-specific historical placement” in nature, and it indicates how “we primates” are intimately bound in a common creaturehood. She argues that there is a mutual relationship between hominid bodily evolution and hominid thinking, and that comprehension develops “through corporeal analysis of the hominid animate form (species-specific body) and tactile-kinaesthetic body (the sentiently felt body; the body as experienced)”. The theory she developed is that “human thinking is modelled on the body” and that the source of human notions about thinking and the evolution of humans, is a “sensorily felt and sensorily feeling body”, which functions as a “semantic template” (Van Huyssteen 2010b:332).

Van Huyssteen (2010b:341) writes that there was a huge expansion in symbolic behaviour between 50 000 and 30 000 years ago, which was expressed in cave paintings, sculpture, body ornamentation, and the development of bone flutes. He continues that language, as one of the most extensive forms of symbolic coding, is a key to understand the symbolic minds of our hominid ancestors. Richard Potts (2004) argues that language could have meant the difference between extinction and survival in a hostile environment, given its capacity to refer to the availability and location of resources like food and water, and to “non-visible aspects of the natural and social environment” (Van Huyssteen 2010b:341). He continues that from the ability to use symbolic language flowed the ability to think, to imagine, to plan, to create strategies for events in the future, and to create complex mental maps, and therefore, humans’ ability to create meaning. The work of Potts provides scientific evidence that symbolic coding of the “non-visible” did not only lead to “the material culture of prehistoric imagery”, but also to human imagination, depravity, moral awareness, and a sense of God (Van Huyssteen 2010b:342). He continues that Potts argues that “the concept of God itself follows from the ability to abstract and conceive of ‘person’”. This notion of Potts is supported by Christian Smith (2003), who argues that “humans are animals with an inescapable moral and spiritual dimension” and that this moral orientation of humans are embedded in broader thought paradigms, which often function as “sacred narratives” (Van Huyssteen 2010b:344). Building on these ideas of Potts and Smith, Van Huyssteen (2010b:344) argues that our Cro-Magnon ancestors were “undeniably us”, and continues that “the nature and behaviour of these ancestors are not understood unless we also presuppose the same moral dimension to their prehistoric beliefs and actions”.

Writing about the challenge of languaging experience, Sheets-Johnstone (2009:373) argues that it was an extraordinary experience for Palaeolithic humans to enter a cave since it was such a different world. An expression of that extraordinary experience was to draw on the walls of the caves, bringing forms from the outside world, like mammoths and bison to the world inside, “and thereby populate an unfamiliar world with the familiar”. She also takes a sensory-kinetic approach to the origin of human language and in comprehending where sign language fits into evolutionary history. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:248) refers to the work of Lieberman who used the concept of “a whole body gestural system”, and writes that human language developed out of a primate communication system “enhanced by constant bipedalism”, in other words, language developed out of an already existent kinetic semantic in which the whole body was used and which was predominantly visual. She continues that

sign language developed from these semantics, “it stems from movement, the immeasurable possibilities of movement, and from the fact that movement and meaning are naturally intertwined...The conceptual foundations of verbal language are thus to be found by way of the body”. She identifies “bipedality” as the defining moment in hominid evolutionary history. The posture of the body changed and the male sexual organs became more visible while female organs became relatively more hidden, which brought about a change in sexual signalling (Van Huyssteen 2010b:333). Sheets-Johnstone argues that “the bipedal penile display in hominid males” is a corporeal representation and therefore “on a direct continuum with articulate gesture and primordial language” (Van Huyssteen 2010b:333). There is a fundamental connection between penile erection and primate bipedality, and the essence of her argument is that through erection and expansion the animal calls attention to itself — this has a major significance for bipedality as a “consistent, even persistent, exposure of the penis”. Van Huyssteen (2010b:333) continues that for Sheets-Johnstone the understanding is that “no language can be spoken for which the body is unprepared — and its consequence: to understand the origin and evolution of a language is to understand a sensory-kinetic lifeworld”. The implication is that sexuality, imagination and morality are intimately linked to the history of hominid evolution (Van Huyssteen 2010b:334).

Referring to her earlier work, Sheets-Johnstone (2009:87) maintains that what makes humans unique is the “rich and complex tactility that grounds all human beings in the world”, and not the kind of organs or features they have. There is a “sheer physicality of the flesh” which is possible for human beings that nonhuman animals do not know. It is “the body-in-movement that is lived”, a physicality that is differentially lived, which leads her to comment that it is perhaps not language that marks the uniqueness of humans, but their lovemaking. She describes it as “sensuous density of being in the flesh”, since lovemaking displays a “way of being in the world; it is a celebration of a certain I/World relationship; it is the having of a certain interanimate world” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:86). It implies that human uniqueness should be explored “at the level of sensory-kinetic worlds” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:65).

Van Huyssteen (2010b:334) refers to Steven Mithen (2006), who maintains that the survival of Neanderthals was not only dependent on the ability to make music, but that “music and gesture, including dance, formed the primary means of communication among these large-brained hominids”. In his book “Alone in the world?” (2006), Van Huyssteen writes that the embodiment of music and language share certain modes of expression that have a biological

basis in the brain: they are vocal (speech and song), they can be gestural (dance and sign language), and they can be written down (Van Huyssteen 2010b:334). The implication for the evolution of music and language abilities of bipedalism is that music and language can never be separated from embodied movement (Van Huyssteen 2010b:335). Mithen argues that the ability of humans to make music “has been encoded into the human genome during the evolutionary history of our species” (Van Huyssteen 2010b:335). He cites the primatologist, Frans de Waal who developed the notion of proto-moral emotional blocks, which are present in monkeys and chimpanzees and considered to be at the roots of human morality as displayed in the presence of empathy and consolation in humans and primates. Van Huyssteen (2010b:336) continues that behaviour that constitutes the basis of sociality is empathy, reciprocity, peacemaking/reconciliation, and the aptitude to follow and learn social rules. He argues that human morality has developed from primate sociality — the difference being that human morality is more sophisticated in the way in which they enforce the moral codes in society through reward, punishment, and reputation building, and the degree of reason and judgment with which they apply it (Van Huyssteen 2010b:337). Van Huyssteen continues that “goodness, generosity and genuine kindness come just as naturally to us as meaner, aggressive feelings”. Morality is not veneer that merely disguises selfishness and self-interest, but is inherent to the embodied evolutionary nature of humans making humans moral by nature (Van Huyssteen 2010:337).

Van Huyssteen (2010b:337) believes that human evolutionary history demonstrates that “embodied human cognition and communication is exemplified by the evolution of human traits as diverse as sexuality, language/musicality, and morality, and the explicit embeddedness of these traits in cognitive fluidity, consciousness, and imagination”. He refers to Charles Darwin who writes that curiosity, memory, moral sense, reason, imagination, and our power of observation directly contributes to the evolutionary development of human cognition. One of the themes that Van Huyssteen develops in his evolutionary epistemology, is that cognition is the result of “a complex interactive process in which we move beyond our biological roots without ever losing touch with them”, all the time acknowledging that human knowledge deeply depends on cultural determinants (Van Huyssteen 2010b:340).

Richard Joyce (2006) as cited by Van Huyssteen (2010b:346) asks the question about the implication of our moral sense if we accept that humans are the result of biological evolution and concludes that “the moral sense is indeed an innate, evolved faculty”. It implies a

capacity to make moral judgements, to think about the world in moral terms, and does not hold “a belief in any particular set of judgements”. Van Huyssteen (2010b:347) writes that from “a postfoundationalist view some of our religious beliefs are more plausible, credible than others”, and that it would be absurd to argue that our beliefs, which include moral and religious convictions, are unjustified, since our beliefs and belief-systems are based on our evolutionary and neurological capacities, or exist for other cultural reasons. He continues that “the evolutionary origins of the human moral sense indeed tell us nothing about how we get to construct moral decisions, codes and laws”.

1.5.2 Anthropology

Mascia-Lees (2011:1) writes that the study of the body became an object of study in anthropology in the 1980s after its emergence in the humanities and social sciences in the 1970s and had become a “fertile site” from where anthropologists have developed various models about the operations of power, how systems oppress people, and how the body can become a site for political change and agency. She writes that an “anthropology of the body” has been influenced by two major insights: that any construct about “the body” duplicates assumptions about bodies being universal and normative; that attention must be paid to embodiment as “a way of inhabiting the world as well as the source of personhood, self, and subjectivity, and the precondition of intersubjectivity”, since it is not possible to separate the body from its lived experiences (Mascia-Lees 2011:2). She continues that bodies are grounded in actual life-worlds.

Anthropologists reflect this situatedness of the body in the following range of contributions, including the aesthetic embodiment and consumer capitalism; the evaluations of racial difference and ongoing racial learning in Puerto Rican and Brazilian neighbourhoods in Newark; the performance of gender acts and body practices as a practice of political activism; bioethics and the attentions to the body as patient; the social, material and spiritual dimensions of bodiliness as expressed in the ceremonial costumes and masks of the Kayapo of Brazil; the reformation of bodily practices in colonial Sudan; the display of dead bodies on the northern-Mexican border as a “vehicle for political productions of authority and national identity”, and a failure by the state to protect life; the idea of “body-love” and the appreciation for the design of the body; transgender individuals in Indonesia; the “embodied, affective dimensions of scientists’ engagement with their instruments as expressed in the

notion of haptic creativity; the exploration in paralympic sport of the sensuous, lived and impaired body; the reasons for body-modification and the clarification of the human/animal border; the experience of chronic pain and the way it relates to notions of the body in the West; the phenomenon of racialisation in France, South Africa and the United States of America; the transmission of embodied memories in Holocaust descendants; the embodied experience of movement as experienced by transnational patients travelling to Buenos Aires; and the understanding of the body in virtual and physical worlds (Mascia-Lees 2011:xvii – xxv).

Csordas (2011:147) identifies ten components of corporeality that defines embodiment, namely bodily form; sensory experience; movement; orientation in space; the capacity to use tools and technology; gender; metabolism; copresence as expressed in the “historically and culturally modulated forms of intersubjectivity, intercorporeality, alterity, sociability, and somatic modes of attention”; virtual worlds, where affect is experienced as feelings and emotion, based on cultural formulation; and finally, temporality, which is experienced in aging, mortality, death and out of body experiences. He refers to the work of Merton (1987), who developed SRM (strategic research material), whereby he identifies relevant patterns of scientific practices and categories that are relevant to embodiment in anthropology, including health, religion, technology, violence, sexuality, dance, and space/place (Csordas 2011:148). He then endeavours to create a framework whereby embodiment could be investigated together with cultural features.

Boellstorff (2011:504) investigates how the body is transformed by virtual worlds in online communities, but also in the real world, that is, offline. He continues to emphasise the point that “virtual embodiment is always embodiment in a virtual place” and that as a consequence “the pluralisation of place that virtual worlds entail holds foundational implications for online corporeality”. He writes that colonial, heterosexist, patriarchal and capitalist authority is also advanced or undermined in a variety of forms of cybersociality, and the binary of virtual/actual could also be added to other dichotomies like mind/body and culture/nature (Boellstorff 2011:505). He writes that more than one hundred million people have a presence in virtual worlds and it is necessary to understand how these virtual worlds have an effect on “actual-world socialities” (Boellstorff 2011:516). He continues that “the pluralisation of worlding” is a form of internal destabilisation, which upsets Western cultural notions of embodiment and place. It opens up new possibilities for embodiment with the implication

that worlds can be multiple, similar to cultures, and provide “a new way of thinking *multiplicity*”. He argues that “virtual worlds pluralize being-in-the-world” in contrast to a totalitarian understanding of personhood and society as “being-in-a-singular-world” (Boellstorff 2011:517). He continues that this in turn enables the possibility to reconstruct Western notions of the body, place, and the social.

1.6 Cognitive science and neurobiology

René Descartes made a distinction between “*res extensa*” as physical things that can be measured and divided, and “*res cogitans*” as the thinking substances that are indivisible and unextended. The body, including the brain and nervous system, was classified as physical things and the mind, with its desires and thoughts, was classified under the second group. According to Gibbs (2005:4), the Cartesian dualism gave rise to a variety of other dualisms like reason/feeling, objective/subjective, experience/knowledge, verbal/non-verbal and theory opposed to practice. The legacy in Western tradition is that the body is seen as solid, and the self, which includes the mind, is viewed as insubstantial. The mind was often equated with mechanical objects, such as a telephone switchboard, a hydraulic machine, a personal computer, and recently the Internet. Cognitive science came into being in the 1950s with the development of computers; that gave rise to the notion of the mind as computer. Turing (1950) made a sharp distinction between a person’s physical and intellectual capacities, while cognitive sciences continued in this line, excluding the body as a methodological decision, and presuming that “cognition is autonomous, logical and disembodied” (Gibbs 2005:5). The processes of cognition were viewed as purely mental phenomena and seldom linked with embodied experience. The question is whether cognitive science merely sees it as a methodological approach or whether they really believe this separation as essential to cognition.

Gibbs points out how scientists attempt to overcome this strict dualism by reducing mental functions to mere brain processes and in doing so, basically reducing the mind to brain and the body to brain, with especially neuroscientists ignoring the important role the body plays in the cognitive functioning of the brain. Gibbs (2005:9) refers to the book by Sheets-Johnson (1999) that describes how language, emotion, cognitive development, memory, consciousness, and other functions are grounded in embodiment; she writes that “the brain is certainly part of an integrated dynamic system devoted to the moment-by-moment embodied

dynamics of everyday life”. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:188) writes that in the contemporary western world, and especially in the cognitivist programmes of research in science and philosophy, there is “a tendency to be mesmerized by brains, so mesmerized that the larger creaturely world of which humans are a part is forgotten, egregiously slighted, or arrogantly distorted”. She argues for an evolutionary understanding of human consciousness that considers and takes into account the historical fact that “while all humans are hominids, not all hominids are human”, implying that any research into the evolution of human consciousness should factor in the “intellectual acumen of nonhuman animals” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:189). She continues to describe “an evolutionary understanding of consciousness on the basis of animate form” as a radical departure from “materialist conceptions, that basically identify consciousness and matter, [and] eschew serious inquiry into the nature of animate life”.

Herzfeld (2010:117) writes that within the field of computer science, questions of mind, consciousness and soul normally arise in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and that the question about whether an “artificially intelligent computer” might have a soul, is linked to the notion of mind and soul. She explores three approaches of intelligence: intelligence as problem solving, embodied intelligence, and relational intelligence. With regard to the first, she writes that it does not seem possible to capture intelligence in a symbolic system, that it only seldom is an abstract process of the mind, and much better characterised by the capacity to “act within an environment” (Herzfeld 2010:119). This means that it should be able to interact with the material world and in a community, which holds that intelligence is embodied. She continues that “our bodies determine much of the nature of our interaction with the world around us. We experience the world through our senses, act within the world through our voices and movements”. It also involves our “distinctive physical embodiment”, which is revealed in the way in which we interact with our environment — “a different body would mean we would experience the world differently” (Herzfeld 2010:120). Relational intelligence requires the capacity to express, manage, perceive and facilitate one’s emotion into thought, as expressed in the notion of emotional intelligence. Herzfeld (2010:125) refers to Turing, Damasio, Winograd and Flores who all interpret “intelligence as predicated on social activity”. It is uncertain if a computer will be able to enter into relationships with humans, but emotion and embodiment is seen as an integral part of intelligence, and that is “saying more about our understanding of ourselves as humans than it does about our machines” (Herzfeld 2010:125).

Gibbs (2005:10) argues that embodiment relates to three levels of personhood: neural events, the cognitive unconscious, and phenomenological experience. He writes that not enough attention has been given to the experiences of people in trying to explain aspects like language, cognition and perception. There have been important developments in cognitive science, one being the development of the dynamic systems theory, which focuses on the “temporal dimensions of cognition” in an attempt to explain how people’s behaviour stems from the relationship between body, brain and environment. In this theory, “simple and complex behaviour are higher-order products of self-organization processes”. This theory allows for the interaction between a person’s body, the environment, and social context. In doing so, behaviour is generated that is meaningful and adaptive. According to Gibbs (2005:11), another important development is the embodied nature of language and mind as expressed in cognitive linguistics. In this discipline, ways are explored in which bodily experiences, communicative functions, and conceptual knowledge inform linguistic structures. The body is an important source to understand abstract concepts; metaphors are very helpful “in mapping experiences of the body to help structure abstract ideas that are fundamental to how people speak and think”.

Human cognition is more and more understood in terms of embodiment. Gibbs (2005:12) writes that in this kind of cognitive science the “experiences of the body are represented as ideas in the mind, and the body provides valuable resources for off-loading cognition such that mind is distributed across brain, body, and world interactions”. In no way does this imply that human cognition is only driven by experiences of the body, but the role of the body in human cognition should take centre stage. This ties in with the work of Sheets-Johnstone (2009:5), who shows that movement and thinking are components of a “kinetic bodily logos” where thinking and movement are not separate occurrences, but finely tuned to an evolving dynamic situation. Infants think in movement and their initial concepts are based on the kinetic experience of their own movement and of that in the world that surrounds them. Nonverbal behaviours exist that have never been put into a language code, yet they have an effect on “articulate intercorporeal intentions”. It then is a matter of speaking of language as “post-kinetic”, rather than speaking of the time before language is acquired as “pre-linguistic”. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:9) refers to the work of Roger Sperry who found that “the brain is an organ of and for movement, and testifies to the ties between affectivity and the tactile-kinesthetic body”. She explores the intimate relationship between emotions and movement and writes that bodily movements tied with emotions are not similar to facial

expressions connected to automatic nervous system activity. The focus is on the “whole-body experience of emotion”, the experience of being moved and moving (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:211). The evolutionary importance of emotion is to motivate action, but it also has a social significance to let others know how one feels and to fathom what others are feeling tied to movement. Emotions then are prime motivators compelling creatures to behave since “they feel themselves moved to move”. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:213) writes that “emotions move us, and in moving us are quintessentially linked to kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic bodies”. The implications are that movement is not equal to behaviour and the brain is not a body. Living creatures experience “real-life bodily happenings”, which have tactile and kinaesthetic resonations — “what is moved and moved to move is not a brain but a living organism” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:214). It also implies that the understanding of emotion without “whole-body phenomena” of emotions is an impoverished understanding. Sheets-Johnstone (2009:215) writes that we struggle to view ourselves and other life forms as intact organisms with living bodies and not as brains or machines and writes that “we come into the world moving; moving and feeling moved to move are what are gone when we die...We lament or fear that we will no longer be animate beings but merely material stuff — lifeless, unmoved”. This is especially expressed in man’s desire to dance. The dancer always takes their body along and shows “the extraordinary power of movement to capture and communicate ineffable qualia of life, memorializing ever anew that ‘single fleeting moment when you feel alive’, and celebrating...the ineluctable modality of animate movement” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:324). She describes movement as the “abiding matchpoint with the world” and as “the basis of our concept of space, time, and force, and is the primary mode of sense-making, basic even to the world of written language” (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:361).

Cognitive neuroscience, neuropsychology and experimental psychology (for example somatic psychology) have been researching the difference and characterisation of implicit and explicit memories. Explicit memory is defined as “the conscious, intentional retrieval of past information or events, and is measured with tasks such as recognition and free recall”, whereas implicit memory is typically described as the “nonconscious, unintentional form of memory retrieval” and is evident in priming, which facilitates the performance of cognitive tasks based on the repetition of stimuli opposed to new stimuli (Ilana & Cabeza 2011:174). Neuroimaging has supported the idea that distinct neural systems are affected in explicit and implicit memory and that these patterns are quite complex, but evidence does indicate that there are important distinctions between these different memory phenomena (Ilana & Cabeza

2011:176). They continue that explicit memory involves the prefrontal cortex and dorsal posterior parietal cortex, whereas the regions of the brain associated with implicit memory vary depending on the kind of task and type of stimuli. Ilana and Cabeza (2011:185), however, point out that there may be ways in which these two distinct memory phenomena may be interrelated and that the interrelationship between implicit and explicit memory should be reflected in “an effective model of memory and consciousness”

The notion of body memory refers to “all the implicit knowledge, capacities and dispositions that structure and guide our everyday being-in-the-world without the need to deliberately think of how we do something, to explicitly remember what we did, or to anticipate what we want to do” (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs, 2013:82). They continue that this kind of knowledge is accumulated “in the course of our embodied experiences”, especially in early childhood; the knowledge is then transformed throughout our life. They write that “body memory is our lived pasts” and distinguishes six forms of body memory, including habitual or procedural body memory (habitual memory which enables us to acquire sensorimotor skills); situational body memory (this is atmospheric memory and the memory of interior and exterior spaces); inter-corporeal body memory (a bodily knowing of how to deal with others); incorporative body memory (the adaption of poses, manners and gender roles based on family and cultural environments); pain memory (the impact on physical painful experiences on the present moment); and traumatic memory (the impact of traumatic experiences on the present) which is stored in the body (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs, 2013:83). They regard the body as a “meaning-seeking system” which constantly scans its environment for coherence and connections — in this way, body memory is viewed as “a system of dispositions relating to the world” (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs, 2013:86). Body memory connects the structures which are “organism bound” and “environment bound” to facilitate a continuous interaction between them, so that they become “assimilating and accommodating at once” (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs, 2013:87). They write that this type of memory is sidelined in contemporary societies, with an emphasis on “declarative memory systems” and a loss of the central role of our lived-body experiences in our actions, identity and attitudes (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs, 2013:90). They continue that “body memories are actions performed by the body”. These memories are not stored as autobiographical and hippocampal memory, but are particular “affect-laden” — stored with a deep bond between affect centres and movement centres (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs, 2013:91). They continue that these memories are stored “in our neural networks, as well as in firing patterns in the muscle fibres”. In her

work on body mapping, Meyburgh (2006:13) refers to the geneticist and professor in biophysics, Mae-Wan Ho, who writes the following:

There is no doubt that a body consciousness exists prior to the “brain” consciousness associated with the nervous system. The body consciousness has also a memory. The relevant transmission system is called proton jump-conduction which belongs to a form of semi-conduction in condensed matter, and is much faster than conduction of electrical signals by the nerves. Thus the “ground substance” of the entire body has a much better intercommunication system than can be provided by the nervous system alone.

The discovery of mirror-neurons/mirror cells in monkeys (neurological responses to the experience of other individuals, “feeling” the experience second-hand, which is the necessary condition for empathy) has led to the identification by Rizzolatti and Craighero in 2004 of the physiological mechanism for perception-action coupling in humans. Perceiving the emotion in one individual activates neural mechanisms in an observer, allowing the observer to resonate with the emotional state of the individual being observed. Cognitively adopting the perspective of another evokes strong empathetic concern. In other words, instead of simply observing another person’s experience, thinking about it increases empathy. Self-awareness is an essential condition to make inferences about the mental state of others, and without self-regulation, information processing (like emotions) becomes primarily bound to external stimulation (Gerdes & Segal 2011:143). Further research in gender-related studies of empathy and brain function, suggests that females may use mirror neurons more extensively than males. This supports the theory that men and women rely on different neurological strategies to access others’ subjective experiences; in general, women have a higher tendency towards empathetic experiences than men (Gerdes & Segal 2011:143). Mindful observation enables a person to remain conscious of the fact that another’s pain, confusion or sense of disempowerment does not belong to the person observing (Gerdes & Segal 2011:146). Mindfulness and self-observation is the key to control our own emotional state.

Hollingsworth (2008:846) refers to Siegel who describes mindfulness as “paying attention, in the present moment, on purpose, without grasping to judgments”. Interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) aims to paint a picture of human experiences and the dynamics of change across the lifespan by focussing on ways in which human beings are formed and transformed through relationships. It is especially interested in the processes by which neural

systems shape human patterns of attachment and how these attachments shape neuron patterns. It looks at how relationships transform the architecture and functioning of the human brain. Louis Cozzolino, a key figure in IPNB defines it as “the study of how we attach and grow and interconnect throughout life” (Hollingsworth 2008:841). Empathy is derived from the German word “Einfühlung”, or “to feel into”. It is about the capacity to be affected by, and share in the state of another in such a way that we maintain self-awareness, even as we “feel into” the other’s experience. Sharing does not mean fusing with (Hollingsworth 2008:839). Interpersonal attunement in IPNB refers to the experience of a sense of emotional attunement with another attentive individual. More compassionate ways of being in the world become possible when we relate to others face-to-face, voice-to-voice, and body-to-body. Relationships with others bring us in contact with that which transcends the ordinary (Hollingsworth 2008:850). He continues that intrapersonal attunement in IPNB refers to mindful awareness (intentional, nonjudgmental attentiveness to one’s own thoughts, feelings and bodily states in the moment), which has the possibility to change previous patterns of fear, inflexibility and reactivity to newly integrated patterns of calm, adaptability and balance. IPNB suggests that learning not to fear and learning to love are mutually conditioning neurobiological realities, and that relationships of safety and trust are integral to the emergence of both. Fear, also the fear of compassion, is primal and powerful and inversely related to compassion (Hollingsworth 2008:852). IPNB points to storytelling as a key means of neural regulation and integration. The hypothesis is that, (time period for clarity, for example historically) the practice of telling and listening to narratives became an evolutionary strategy to allow the brain to grow further in size and complexity. Research reveals strong links between mental health, emotional regulation, secure attachments, and coherent narratives. Cozzolino writes that narratives provided a tool for the brain to bringing together multiple functions from diverse neural networks for emotional and neural integration. Storytelling holds the potential to raise us to greater levels of concern for the pain of others, and to stand in solidarity with others by weaving their stories into our own stories (Hollingsworth 2008:852).

Recent research in the field of behavioural epigenetics within neurobiology and molecular biology has strongly suggested that traumatic experiences in a person’s past or in the past of his/her recent ancestors can leave scars to the molecules which are attached to DNA, which means that these experiences “are never gone, even if they have been forgotten” (Hurley 2013:3). He continues that these experiences become part of a person, “a molecular residue

holding fast to our genetic scaffolding”, which implies that certain behavioural and psychological characteristics are passed down from generation to generation while the DNA remains the same. He refers to the work of Michael Meaney, a neurobiologist and Moshe Szyf, a molecular biologist who introduced the field of behavioural epigenetics, which focuses on the methyl groups that are attached to genes, but still remain separate from the double-helix DNA code (Hurley 2013:2). He continues that where at first it was believed that epigenetic changes can only occur during fetal development, research has shown that diet and certain chemicals can change these methyl groups and that the changed methyl groups can be inherited from previous generations.

The research by Meaney and Szyf centred on the influence of the environment on the genome with alterations happening in humans who are connected to a history of childhood abuse (Labonte, Maussion, Suderman, Yerko, Mechawar, Meaney, Szyf and Turecki 2011:24S). It is focussed on persons who committed suicide and confirms “the involvement of epigenetic alterations in the hippocampus of abused suicide completers and (the findings) suggest that childhood abuse induces long-lasting modifications that could be involved in the aetiology of suicide behaviours” (Labonte et al. 2011:25S). In further research they have indicated that the long-term affect of early life experiences is partially facilitated by epigenetic alterations in the brain, and that it is reasonable to assume that “at least part of the broad epigenetic response observed in rats to early life experiences may be evolutionary conserved in humans (Suderman, McGowan, Sasaki, Huang, Hallet, Meaney, Turecki and Szyf 2012:17266). Referring to the work of AharonRazin, Hurley (2013:6) writes that methyl groups can be married to the DNA and be replicated with the DNA “through a hundred generations”. In studying 14 Russian children raised in an orphanage, and 14 Russian children raised by their biological parents in 2012, they found “far more methylation in the orphans’ genes, including many that play an important role in neural communication and brain development function” (Hurley 2013:9). He refers to Elena Grigorenko, a co-author of Szyf who says that stress caused by the early separation from biological parents “impacts long-term programming of genome function”. He also refers to a collaborator of Meaney, Frances Champagne who emphasises that “stress is a big suppressor of maternal behaviour” and that tactile interaction is crucial since “sensory input, the touching, is so important for the developing brain”. If it is true that epigenetic changes to the gene underlie emotional and intellectual intelligence, the possibility exists that depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder could be treated with epigenetic medications as opposed to psychiatric drugs (Hurley 2013:13).

1.7 Towards a richer understanding of the body

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the aim of this interdisciplinary perspective is not only to follow the trajectory of the corporeal turn, but it is especially about developing a deeper understanding of the body and opening deeper levels of inquiry about the body, especially within theology. This is by no means an in depth interdisciplinary discussion between theology and other selected disciplines on specific issues regarding the body and embodiment — that would be the purpose of future research projects. This is foremost an endeavour to thicken our understanding of the body (opposed to a thin, one-dimensional description). It is an investigation into how theology took note of the corporeal-linguistic turn and how theology can incorporate this denser description to enable deeper and deeper inquiries about the lived human body within a specific life-world, in this case sub-Saharan Africa, and more specifically South Africa.

I would suggest that an expanded, richer understanding of the body would lead to the following insights:

- The human body is the result of evolutionary development and humans did not suddenly appear on the scene walking upright and speaking. The ability to walk upright (bipedality) is considered to be the defining moment in hominid evolutionary history, since it brought about a change in sexual signalling and developed the ability to use signals and language, and in turn, the human brain has been reorganised in response to language. This was not a static process, but the result of a whole body gestural system where language developed out of a primate communications system enhanced by constant bipedalism. The body provided the conceptual foundations of verbal language. The tactile-kinaesthetic body (the sensory feeling and sensory felt body) served and still serves as a semantic template. We can only understand the evolution of language within the context of a sensory-kinetic world.
- Sexuality, imagination and morality are intimately linked to the embodied evolutionary nature of humans. The ability to think, imagine, plan, and create strategies, complex mental maps, and meaning flowed from the ability to use language. The ability to use symbolic coding of the non-visible (as expressed in the paleolithic cave paintings in France and Spain around 35 000 years ago) lead to human imagination, moral awareness and a sense of the Divine.

- It may be that language, self-awareness, imagination, consciousness, moral awareness, symbolic behaviour and mythology define our human uniqueness, but as primates we have a species-specific placement in history and share a common creaturehood with other primates. We are intimately linked to the rest of creation.
- We are also intimately linked to other humans in society as expressed by the African notion of Ubuntu, which balances individualism with community, as well as the human-in-community with the life-world and universe.
- Our moral dimensions are linked to our prehistoric roots, even though it does not explain how all moral decisions, codes and laws are constructed. Human morality is certainly sophisticated, but has a basis in primate sociality. Proto-emotional blocks are present in monkeys and chimpanzees and are at the roots of human morality as demonstrated by the presence of empathy and consolation in humans and other primates. The discovery of mirror-neurons in the brain provides a strong explanation of how the perception of the emotion in one individual activates neural mechanisms in an observer, allowing the observer to resonate with the emotional state of the individual being observed. Interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) indicates how human patterns of attachment are shaped by the processes of neural systems, and how these attachments shape neuron patterns. It investigates how relationships transform the architecture and functioning of the human brain. Morality does not arrive from a “higher source”. Our moral concepts (for example freedom, compassion, justice, tolerance, and virtue) are structured metaphorically and these moral metaphors have a grounding in our bodies and in our social interactions. These metaphors are related to experiences of human well-being, and especially physical well-being.
- The body is situated in a concrete and specific life-world. The body is a vehicle for being in this concrete life-world, and to have a body as a living creature is to be involved in a definite environment. Bodily being is rich and complex, and the exploration of the living realities of corporeal life is an endeavour to understand what it means to be the bodies that we are in every situation. The body can also be referred to as a system of “meaning-seeking”, which constantly interacts with its environment in the effort of seeking coherence.
- The body is always consciousness embodied, meaning that the embodied mind is part of a living body. The characteristics of mind are shaped by the body and the brain and by the situatedness of the body in everyday life, implying that mind is distributed across body, brain and lived-world. Experiences of the body are not the only driver of

human cognition, but the body does play a crucial role in providing resources for cognition. Thinking and movement are finely tuned to a specific dynamic situation and are components of “kinetic bodily logos”. Similarly, an intimate relationship exists between emotions and movement, and focuses on the “whole-body” experience of emotions, compelling humans to behave since they feel themselves “moved to move”.

- Body image/body schema or the later concept of corporal-kinetic intentionality/corporal-kinetic patterning are aspects of the “meaning-seeking body”; these express the experience that we feel and perceive through our own bodies, the way we understand bodies in general, and the emotional attitudes to our own bodies. The quintessential perceptual experience of our own body is its repertoire of movements and the possibility of movement, leading to more complex activities.
- Body memory is another aspect of the “meaning-seeking body”. It refers to the functioning of implicit memory in the brain within the wider context of body consciousness. It is about all the implicit knowledge, capacities and dispositions that structure and guide our everyday being-in-the world without deliberately thinking about how we do something or explicitly trying to remember what we did or anticipate what we want to do. It is about the whole-body storage of memory, also of traumatic events that research in molecular biology has indicated can also be inherited from previous generations.
- Appropriate and adequate touch — the contact of skin on skin is crucial for humans to flourish physically, emotionally, socially, and morally. Stress tends to suppress maternal behaviour and the expression of tactile interaction that is so important for the developing brain.
- An intricate relationship exists between the body, its life-world and language, and the languaging of the experiences of the body. The quest is to move beyond the subject/object distinction and to speak from our bodies — how we interact bodily in a specific situation, and attempt to express the bodily sense of living in a concrete situation, speaking from a “sensed experience”. Experiencing is essentially sensemaking (the “meaning-seeking body”) and there can be no sensemaking without experiencing and eventing, where eventing refers to elaboration of the interactional events with other people through the use of implicit language. The challenge of languaging dynamic experiences is to stay true to the truth of the experience. Everyday judgements, beliefs and reactions, as well as the everyday use of language

is put aside and the challenge is to listen to the interior dynamics of the experience and, based on that, formulate thick descriptions of lived experiences. Primacy is given to the embodied experience and is viewed as an important source of knowledge, and for some, it is the only source of knowledge that describes experience as the “grounding source of knowledge”, and the dedicated examination of experience as “the testing ground of one’s knowledge”.

- The body as a system of “sensemaking” is also about the lived body that gives meaning to, or facilitates an understanding of the textures and aliveness of the world that is relevant to persons. This bodily experiencing of the life-world can also be expressed in the notion of “embodied understanding” or “embodied enquiry”. It is a form of knowing that evokes the possibility of its living, bodily relevant textures and meanings, as opposed to a disembodied knowing, which develops plausible abstract explanations, but which is removed from a person’s own bodily lived possibilities. Once again the aim is to surpass understanding as objective or subjective, but to view it as participatory. The focus is on the individual person as a departure point and on the personal narrative that makes sense of identity within a network of relationships and the concrete context of their culture, life-world, God or the search for a higher purpose. Bodymind therapies can create an awareness of the intricate relationship between our bodies and our life-worlds, of the wisdom of our embodiment and a sense of belonging with our bodies, that is, to be the bodies that we are.
- Cyberspace and the use of social media present a new frontier as a context for experiences of the body and embodiment. The way in the body is transformed by virtual worlds and online communities, as well as the offline world and its communities calls for investigation. It opens a new way of thinking about “multiplicity”, which does not only imply multiple identities, but also embodiment in multiple worlds.
- If the mind is never disembodied, the body can never merely be a vessel for the disembodied mind. In various religions the disembodied mind has been identified as Soul or Spirit, and has been portrayed as independent of the body for its existence. The concept of soul should be embodied, that is, shaped by the body, located as part of the body, and dependent on the body for its ongoing existence. Empathy is regarded as a precondition for a nurturant morality; an embodied spirituality is based on a metaphor for God which is rooted in empathy for all things, linking moral values to spiritual experiences. It is the body that makes an empathetic connection to the

world possible. Spirituality in everyday life is grounded by the palpable, lived experience of meeting a mystery that is always in excess of the known. An embodied spirituality allows the living dimensions of mystery to be lived as mystery, without reducing it to categories of thought. This would relate to the notion of an implicit body memory or a body consciousness of mystery, without an extensive explicit knowing.

1.8 The corporeal turn

Was there really something like a “corporeal turn”, a conceptual shift that happened some time during the twentieth century? An Austrian-born philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein set in motion a linguistic turn, followed by several other linguistic turns in early twentieth century, between the First and Second World Wars. Soon after, French philosophers and the phenomenological movement laid the foundation for the corporeal turn. The Second World War was the turning point, not only because of the scale of destruction and the enormous loss of human life, but also because of the advances in technology stimulated by the weapon industry, aviation and espionage. The atrocities committed during this war, the images of destruction, and of dead tortured and emaciated bodies were captured in photos and on film reels and broadcasted in cinemas and in newspapers. French philosophers, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), Gabriel Marcel (1951) and Michel Foucault (1954) put the body at the centre of the ontological problem and in this way, initiated the corporeal turn. The work of Merleau-Ponty was especially influential, and with the translation of his book, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) into English, he reached a much wider audience in the United Kingdom and across the Atlantic Ocean as far as North America. The influence of his ideas is very clear in the humanities and social sciences, especially in sociology, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. I would agree with the description of the historian Gabrielle Spiegel that the generation who was born during or after the Second World War and who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s asked further questions that resulted in more “turns”. Norbert Elias (1969) was one of the first academics to carry the corporeal turn into sociology with his analysis of the civilised body. The 1960s and 1970s were also the decades when great value was placed on the body in social life; in the 1980s, feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, and queer theories further impacted on the social regulation and construction of the bodies of women, black people, impoverished people, and of gay men and lesbian women. The HIV/AIDS epidemic which raised its head in the 1980s also had an

impact on perceptions of the healthy/diseased body, of intercorporeal contact and relationships, as well as perceptions along the line of the touchables/untouchables. Humanistic psychology, developed in the 1960s, laid the foundation for the emergence of somatic psychology in the 1970s and 1980s with an emphasis on the body as subject that determines the method of inquiry. The application of bodymind therapies within somatic psychology was greatly influenced by the cultural changes of the 1960s, as well as the influx of people and Asian wisdom into the West, with for example Tibetan refugees settling in Europe and North America after the annexation of Tibet by China in 1949.

Scanning the literature researched for this chapter (which is in no way exhaustive), one can trace the corporeal turn. The work of the post-war French philosophers appeared in the late 1940s, early 1950s and in translations in the 1960s. Academic publications in other disciplines appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with a lull in the 1980s; in the 1990s, and especially in the last years of this decade there has been a surge in publications on the body and embodiment. My own argument would be that one could refer in broad terms to the corporeal turn (1940-1965), followed by a second wave (1976—1986), and a third wave (1990—2000). Perhaps it would also be feasible to speak of second and third generation corporeal turns. The second generation corporeal turn appears to be a tentative application of the insights from the post-war French philosophers in other disciplines like sociology, psychology and theology. It also seems that it had a limited interdisciplinary scope. From research done within cognitive science, I note a third generation corporeal turn with a striking feature that points to a convergence of the linguistic and corporeal turn, also as a result of cognitive linguistics with an emphasis on how language develops from the body, and the influence of metaphorical thinking. I would refer to this third generation corporeal turn as a corporeal-linguistic turn. Once again, philosophy has set the pace with the work of authors like Eugene Gendlin, *Thinking Beyond Patterns: Body, Language, and Situations* (1991), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the flesh* (1999), and Horst Ruthrof, *The body in language* (2000). Paleanthropology also expressed this awareness of the origin of language and bipedality (the ability to walk upright). The “Roots” series of Maxime Sheets-Johnstone (1990, 1994, 2008) also had a wide influence and her research crossed the divide between philosophy, palaeoanthropology, and evolutionary biology with a special emphasis on the tactile-kinaesthetic body. She developed a “hermeneutics of the body”, which placed the focus on the crucial role of the human body in understanding and meaning. One of the

features of this third generation turn is a wider interdisciplinary inquiry with a special focus on the insights from cognitive science.

It would also be possible to speak of a fourth generation corporeal turn — an integration of the corporeal-linguistic turn and an even wider interdisciplinary inquiry to include sciences, such as molecular biology, evolutionary biology, and further insights developing in social sciences. It could be that this is a further development of the third generation corporeal-linguistic turn, although the wider interdisciplinary inquiry does set it apart. I would also argue that one of the features of a possible fourth generation corporeal turn, is the awareness in natural sciences of the insights of the corporeal turn in the social sciences resulting more and more in a two-directional flow of information. An outstanding feature of the corporeal turn would be its wide interdisciplinary scope of research. Anthropology is a bit of a late bloomer in incorporating the insights from the corporeal turn with a recent publication, *A companion to the anthropology of the body and embodiment*, edited by Mascia-Lees only appearing in 2011. It does, however, contain very stimulating perspectives that focus on the “situatedness of the body”, and especially on the notion of embodiment in cyberspace with the influence of the work by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, still prevalent alongside that by Michel Foucault and the French sociologist, philosopher and anthropologist Pierre Bordieu (1990), who writes about the co-production of social reality by world and body.

Chapter 2

The body and lived experiences in southern Africa

The history of South Africa and the African continent is rich in narratives of how bodies have been controlled and abused, but also used as a “site of resistance” against various forms of oppression, discrimination and alienation. This was amply illustrated by the magnitude of reactions and the barrage of discussions which followed the display, and later the destruction by a vandal, of the controversial painting “The Spear of the Nation” in May 2012. The artist Brett Murray depicted president Jacob Zuma in the posture of the iconic picture by Viktor Ivanov of Vladimir Lenin, but with his penis hanging out (Freedberg 2012:37).



The title alluded to the military wing of the ANC, “Umkhonto we Sizwe” (The Spear of the Nation) and was part of an exhibition at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg titled “Hail to the Thief II”. Freedberg continues that this was a reference to the perception of widespread corruption in government, even in the upper echelons and the picture itself was a satirical portrayal of Zuma’s “exuberant sexuality”, painted before he married his sixth wife and referring to his history of polygamy, seduction and accusations of rape. Freedberg (2012:37) describes the reaction to the painting as “excessive” with the ANC launching a lawsuit on the basis that it violated the dignity of the president and his office, as well as all Africans. Freedberg interprets the reaction of the ANC and the government as a “way to gain support for Zuma [by inserting]...this case into the whole history of racist prejudices about black male sexuality”.

He writes that the controversy went beyond satire on the sexual appetite of the president and his dignity, and evolved “into a colonial racist defamation of all black people” (Freedberg 2012:38). He refers to social commentator, Gillian Schutte who writes about “the grotesquely huge Black male ‘dick-ness’ that resides somewhere in the deep collective consciousness of the white psyche”. Ironically, it was a fifty-eight-year-old Afrikaner who quietly walked into the gallery with a pot of red paint and made a cross over the penis and then the face of Zuma, stating later that it was important that a white man demonstrates resistance to racism. He was followed by a young black taxi-driver who painted black paint all over the picture (Freedberg 2012:38). A young black art historian Mpho Matheolane interprets the event as a focus on “the issue of black people’s representation at the hands of whites...called a continued sense of colonial othering”, a practice that has been governed by “the Western ideological gaze” (Matheolane 2012).

While I followed the debate raging around “The Spear”, I picked up interesting comments relating to how different societies regard the body. Sesanti (2012) writes that for an African child, it is viewed as disrespectful to look at the naked body of an adult, especially their private parts. He then continues that “in terms of individualism, which is accepted in the West, it is perfectly normal to have art for art’s sake. But in Africa, where traditionally individualism (not individuality) is frowned upon...art is not for art’s sake, but for life’s sake”. He quotes Gugu Zuma, the daughter of President Jacob Zuma, who wrote that a black man who does not adhere to the values and beliefs of the West and who subscribes to African culture, “is less human than the next person”. Then there is the comment of the vice chairman of the umKhonto we Sizwe Military Veteran Association (MKMVA) in KwaZulu Natal, who said that if you look at whites, streaking naked at sports events, it looks as if public nudity is acceptable among white people, whereas among black people, it is a taboo to display one’s private parts in public (Liebenberg 2012).

Dana (2012) refers to it as the “Sarah Baartmanisation” of the black body in analysing the role “The Spear” played in the dehumanisation of black people. She refers here to the Khoikhoi woman who was exhibited in nineteenth-century Europe as the “Hottentot Venus” serving as a freak show attraction. After her death on 29 December 1815, her skeleton, genitals, brain and body-cast were displayed at the Paris Musée de l’Homme until 1976 (Holmes 2007:169). After a formal petition by President Nelson Mandela, her remains were finally repatriated to South Africa on 2 May 2002 (Holmes 2007:174). The painting is not

about Zuma with his penis hanging out, but about a black man on display in a gallery, on the internet and in newspapers. Dana writes that “this is the image we have carried with us and it has shamed us, humiliated us...we, the Africans, have internalised these feelings of shame imposed upon us” (Dana 2012). She is of the opinion that what is at stake is not culture, but dignity “and sensitivity to a horrid past full of dehumanisation and other injustices”.

The body as a source of revelation and a site of knowledge matters. “Lived experience” (the experiences of the body in a concrete context) matters. In this chapter, I explore the people of southern Africa’s bodily experiences, with the hope to improve knowledge and understanding in this area, and answer whether, and in what way the corporeal turn can be evaluated from a southern African perspective. While the primary focus is on South Africa, there is the occasional reference to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Narratives about the bodily experiences of people in southern Africa start with the writings of the earliest travelers and missionaries in Africa, and ends with experiences during apartheid and in contemporary South Africa.

2.1 Background: a contemporary and complex narrative

In January 2012, the Democratic Alliance Student Organisation (DASO), the youth movement of the Democratic Alliance (the official opposition) triggered a flood of comments when they used posters of a mixed couple in their campaign with the slogan “In OUR future, you wouldn’t look twice”.



Commenting on the DA poster, Mnguni (2012) writes on Timeslive that in our society race and gender superiority are still dominant, with a man still viewed as an authority figure over a woman, making it possible for a white man to choose a black woman, while it is still very much a taboo for a black man to be in a sexual relationship with a white woman. She continues to describe the poster as “insulting and dehumanising to our society”, with strong “racist undertones”. Referring to the depiction of black and white bodies in an American cartoon in the nineteenth century, Lewis (2011:199) writes that in it the recurring stereotype of black bodies and sexuality is illustrated in “the image of the lewd black man; the myth of the pure white female body; the portrayal of the black/African body as grotesque, uncivilized and crudely sexual, even when formally dressed”. She continues that the representations of stereotypes like this and others keep surfacing in popular culture and media, as well as in academic work. The content of the messages conveyed in contemporary media and culture remains “surprisingly constant”: bodies and sexualities suggest excess, panic and peril or are constructed to serve the agenda of political parties. Jackson, Demissie & Goodwin (2009:xiv) write that these images “create fertile ground for social policies designed to discipline and constrain black bodies, both female and male”, and it is manipulated to uphold inequalities based on colour and gender and to prolong racism in society. These stereotypes that are reproduced in images in popular culture are also employed to keep boundaries in place between communities, based on colour. It is about “keeping black communities segregated, and at times ghettoised, virtually quarantined, in gated communities, apart from others” (Jackson, Demissie & Goodwin 2009:xv). They continue that black women are still portrayed in these media images as easily available and loose, while black men are represented as criminals, irresponsible and absent fathers, drug dealers and “brutish gladiators”.

Since European mapmakers knew so little about the interior of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, they left this area dark. This dark, unexplored terrain led to the nineteenth-century expression of the “Dark Continent”. What other images did this term conjure up in the minds of these Europeans? How did they think about the black bodies inhabiting the land of this “Dark Continent”? Did they only associate black bodies with the unpredictable soil, but not their own, “civilised” white bodies? Pinn (2010:145) writes that the bodies of black people were closely linked “to the materiality of nature: the dark corners of the environment *not* under the control of human will”. Both male and female bodies were constructed as uncivilised for socioeconomic, religious and political reasons. The black body was a prime symbol of chaos, appropriate for work in the world and for pleasure. The bodies of black

women were religiously and morally labelled as “primitive, lascivious and repugnant” (Pinn 2010:81). Even Thomas Jefferson, regarded as an important figure of the American Enlightenment, wrote in 1784 about blacks that their ability to reason and use their imagination was inferior, and states: “I advance therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites in body and mind” (Saint-Aubin 2005:26).

In the English translation of his book “*Peau noire, masques blancs*” (1952), Franz Fanon (1986:12) refers to the “dual narcissism” which he provocatively describes as “the white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness”. He elaborates this statement with the two facts of colonialism where white men consider themselves to be superior to black men and where “black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect”. He then asks the question how they can extricate themselves from this dual narcissism. He writes that the black man who wants to have sexual intercourse with a white woman is an expression of his desire to be white (Fanon 1986:16). At the same time it is a search to find meaning in black identity. The complexity of this colonial relation is further captured by Fanon’s idea that “what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact” since “the dark side of the soul” was often portrayed in Europe by the black man as a symbol of lesser emotions, of evil, sin war, death and famine (Fanon 1986:191). He continues to describe this collective unconsciousness of Europeans as a result of the “unreflected imposition of a culture” which makes it normal to be anti-black.

Phillips (2011:101) relates incidents of “collective panic” that occurred in white communities in Johannesburg, Bulawayo and Salisbury/Harare between 1910 and 1920. These episodes of panic about sex and race were interpreted as “social problems threatening the fundamental moral fibre and social order of colonial society”. Phillips (2011:113) writes that it was an expression of anxiety based on a preoccupation with the harshest punishment for the rape of white women by black men (black peril) and the deterrence of any form of consensual sex between a white woman and a black man (white peril). He continues that the law intervened through the modalities of gender and race with white men remaining outside this regulation. How did the early colonial rulers in sub-Saharan Africa and their successors in apartheid South Africa perceive black bodies? Why were black people and their bodies such a threat? Anthony Pinn writes from within the paradigm of black theology and an African American context. Parallels surely exist between the bodies of black people suffering under the yoke of

slavery in North-America and the black bodies that were oppressed in sub-Saharan Africa during colonisation and under apartheid. Pinn (2010:77) refers to Stoler who remarked that there was a “racially erotic counterpoint”, a linkage between race and sexuality in the nineteenth century, which was used to justify “the construction and use of black bodies within colonial enterprises in various geographies, including the Americas”.

White bodies were considered to be civilised and controlled, whereas black bodies were portrayed as “oversexed and savage”. To maintain the “truth” of the structures and institutions of these colonial empires, black bodies were disciplined (including torture and death) and made docile. After the nineteenth century, “this surveillance was an internal and external mechanism of docility” that was used by white people to determine what was possible for black bodies, and when necessary also for white bodies (Pinn 2010:77). Class and race distinction was further reinforced through sexual restrictions and regulations, and through considering slaves to be of lesser value; slaves “were sufficient fodder for [a] slaveholder’s erotic pathologies and the general sexual release of any white person who desired black flesh” (Pinn 2010:81). During the time of slavery in America (as well as during the period of colonisation in Africa and under apartheid), black bodies only mattered when they served the white man’s purpose, whether it be economic, social or for physical pleasure. This subjugation of black bodies continued after the demise of slavery in the form of rape and sexual mutilation, thereby affirming the status quo through sexualisation.

Pinn (2010:83) continues that religion and theology were used to sexually police bodies, stating that “controlling bodies had to entail regulation of sexual desire to the extent that sex(uality), acted out through flesh, had ramifications for all spaces occupied by (or denied to) these bodies”. After the National Party took power in South Africa in 1948, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, act no. 55 of 1949, was the first major piece of apartheid legislation to be passed, prohibiting the marriage between people of different races. It was followed by the Immorality Act, act no. 21 of 1950 that amended the 1927 act and forbid sexual intercourse between Europeans and anyone who was not European. In the United States, the combination of conservative Christian perceptions of the body and sex, and the oppressive nature of life has led to an alienation of the body. This alienation includes perceptions of the body as sexual, especially regarding homosexuality and other erotic expressions of the body outside acceptable sexual norms (Pinn 2010:84).

Tamale (2011:2) writes that the notion of African bodies having “a homogenous, unchanging sexuality” is a misconception and it does not take seriously the “realities of lives, experiences, identities and relationships”, as well as current developments in scholarship and activism. She acknowledges that there is a danger in uncritically applying Western theories to non-Western contexts since concepts, such as choice, silence, gay, lesbian and coming out convey certain social meanings “steeped in Western ideology and traditions”. It is important to avoid the trap of “homogenising” and “essentialising” people’s sexualities based on factors, such as race, age, religion, socio-economic status, and ethnicity (Tamale 2011:3,12).

Although early anthropologists took an interest in same-sex relationships, their data were interpreted through Western research indicators and resulted in distorted results (Tamale 2011:20). She continues and refers to the work of the anthropologist Jane Kendall who searched for lesbian women in Lesotho in the beginning of the 1990s. She did encounter erotic woman-to-woman relationships among Basotho women, but had to abandon her North American theoretical assumptions, after exposure to “the novel concepts of and meanings of woman-to-woman (*batsoalle*) relationships of the Basotho”. Lewis (2011:201) writes that the legacy of colonialism still remains “in essentialist attitudes towards African sexuality and corporeal differences” where African bodies are viewed as fundamentally bestial and degenerate. She refers to the work of Mudimbe (1988), who uses post-colonial tradition to explore the ways in which the bodies and experiences of Africans have been “discursively inverted” as an example of how “Western-centric, imperial and neo-colonial paradigms are so entrenched in knowledge production and popular culture that they influence the most seemingly progressive, compelling or disinterested accounts” (Lewis 2011:200). She repeats the call of Appiah (1992) for “discursive space-cleaning” as a method to analyse and acknowledge “how others have been historically imagined”.

Some of the earliest records about African sexualities appeared in the writings of missionaries and colonial explorers. Tamale (2011:14) writes that African bodies and sexuality became the touchstone for the justification of colonial enterprise objectives — “to civilise the barbarian and savage natives of the ‘dark continent’”. It was a mission that was implemented through paternalism, brutality, force, arrogance, humiliation, and insensitivity.

2.1.1 The black body in the narratives of early travellers and missionaries

The first description of “Ethiopians” appears in the sixteenth-century version of “Etymologies” under the heading “On men and monsters”, which was written by Isidore of Seville in the sixth and seventh centuries. In it he writes of the race of Sciopedes that exists in Ethiopia “with only one leg but marvellous speed...in the summertime they stretch out on their backs, covering themselves with the shadows of their huge feet” (Butchart 1998:34). From 1500 to around 1650 human bodies were known through the study of authoritative texts and not through direct inspection. Butchart (1998:xi) writes that “these texts repeatedly affirmed the resonance of human bodies with astrological and climatic forces, which alongside legends and virtues attaching to bodies were as much a characteristic of their description as any morphological features”. He continues that the age of Renaissance thought gave way to the age of Classification, where perceptible physical characteristics replaced imaginary ones. This more or less coincided with the European colonisation of Africa. In the botanical classification system of Linnaeus, “Systema Naturae” of 1735, he identifies six varieties of “homo sapiens”. The “European albus” is described as “white, sanguine, muscular, [with] long blond hair, blue eyes, gentle, ingenious, inventive, [and] governed by law”.

In contrast to this description, the classification of “Afer Niger” lists “black, phlegmatic, black frizzled hair, silk-like skin, ape-like nose, thick lips, the breasts of women distended, crafty, lazy, governed by caprice” to be typical characteristics (Butchart 1998:35). The African body became an object of natural history and Butchart (1998:xii) writes that for the first time the African body emerged “into western knowledge in something approximating to the distinctively human form we now take for granted”. Butchart (1998:55) writes that in the period from 1650 to 1830, the African body for the first time moved beyond fantastical characteristics and emerged as a collection of perceivable external organs, “a knowledge that allowed the African body as a surface of skin and topography of corporeal proportions to replace the densely woven tissues of myth”. Butchart (1998:56) writes that the “African body as a surface” was all that existed for Europeans, a body without internal organs and systems. The nature of the surface did change over this period of 180 years. Butchart continues that in the beginning of this period the African body was “merely a collection of external organs”. Here he refers to the work of Dapper (1668), whose writings about the “build of the Kaffirs or Hottentots” was only a listing of “separate surface features”, describing the shape of the

body of the Hottentots as “of medium stature, but slender, with ill-formed bodies and insignificant appearances, and yellowish in colour”. Dapper continues to describe the forehead, eyes, nose, lips, mouth, neck, belly and buttocks of the Hottentot.

Towards the end of this period, the African body was defined by these elements, as well as “the pattern of relationship between them” (Butchart 1998:56). Here Butchart is referring to the work of Barrow (1801) who wrote about the body of the Hottentot as a “morphological structure reflecting the composition of the pieces in their relation to one another” where in his description “the person of the Hottentot while young is by no means void of symmetry”. Butchart (1998:57) writes that the problem of the African body as merely a surface is that it remains a “collection or assemblage of external organs without an interior to unify them”.

Magubane (1997:2) writes that both the anti-slavery movement and the notion of spreading the Gospel to “heathen nations” were rooted in the humanitarian movement which had become stronger since 1760. The Enlightenment was the source for their ideas about free labour, free trade, personal freedom and economic theories. To raise funds, these movements published monthlies to educate the middle and lower classes. Travellers to Africa also published their observations, and the British public were increasingly able to form perceptions of Africans living in southern Africa. These narratives often focused on the conditions of physical bodies of people on a slave ship, in a factory or in an asylum with the idea that the pain and suffering would forge a bond between the oppressed and those willing to help (Magubane 1997:4). John Barrow (1764–1848) was one of the first English travellers to South Africa who held strong opinions about the Boers, slavery and the character of Africans. He described in detail and in great length the faces and bodies of Africans. He made a clear link between the state of mind and the condition of the body, and wrote that lack of body mass, typical of the “Hottentot” indicated a weak and feminine mentality (Magubane 1997:5). He thought that Africans were ugly, but also qualified beauty in the light of the “Noble Savage” (an exclusively male image), where beauty was an important characteristic of the Noble Savage. Older men were described as wise and dignified, but in sharp contrast, older women were negatively portrayed as ugly, hideous and frightful. He also viewed childbearing as the ruin of human form.

Another traveller, William Burchell wrote in 1815 about the un-ladylike behaviour of young women, but he described the “sleek, well anointed limbs” of an older San male who was also

“smooth and ridiculously plump” (Magubane 1997:7). The trope of the “Noble Savage” figured strongly in his description of young men as firm, walking with freedom and boldness whereas women were portrayed with pity and disgust. The Khoikhoi and San, although considered “Noble Savages” were portrayed as weak and feminine compared to the truly “manly tribes” of the Nguni, such as the Xhosa. Magubane (1997:8) writes that another traveller to the Cape, George Thompson described the Xhosa in 1827 as infinitely superior to other races in terms of their courage, humanity and endeavours. Barrow described a group of Xhosa warriors as “the finest figures I ever beheld...tall, robust and muscular...a firmness of carriage, and an open, manly manner which...showed them at once to be equally unconscious of fear, suspicion and treachery. A young man about twenty of six feet and ten inches high was one of the finest figures that was perhaps ever created” (Magubane 1997:9). In this way the body became a powerful symbol, with only the male body associated with qualities such as bravery and honesty. Ouzgane (2002:244) refers to the work of Arthur Saint-Aubin who investigated the way in which a certain trope of the black body was constructed as normal through Western science and medicine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This black body had a huge penis and an insatiable appetite for sex. He writes that this way of pathologising the black male through the process of “othering” was done “to define the European as inherently different and superior...at the core of this body politics lurked an intense white masculine insecurity and anxiety”.

Victorian ideas of proper feminine behaviour were applied to appraise African women, implying that vanity and aggression were condemned, while modesty, docility and obedience were worthy of praise. The “Noble Savage” was a product of “living free and unencumbered in the state of nature”, but at the same time there was the mistrust that it also produced “idleness, barbarism, and sloth” (Magubane 1997:16). It seemed as if Europe was losing its traditional values. The idealised African became a handy symbol for Evangelicals to hold up against the moral corruption in European societies. This mythical African was unspoiled and innocent, living close to nature — this was in sharp contrast to the blatant materialism and greed in Europe that was linked to strong anti-humanitarian tendencies (Magubane 1997:17). William Burchell (1815), for instance, was torn between this ideal and his belief, stating that “although ‘savage society’ had its advantages, it cannot pose an effective challenge to European civilisation”. Magubane (1997:18) continues that “European, male, bourgeois culture” remained the dominant ideal and humanitarian narratives were a combination of “idealism, sentimentality, and revulsion”. Africans were purely measured by European

standards with the hope that one day they might reach the European standard of civilisation. These descriptions of idealised Africans changed over the decades, probably because of structural factors linked to the landing of the 1820 settlers, the growth in the wool industry, and the discovery of gold and diamonds. Narratives emerged about the “Black Peril” (referring to accusations made against houseboys who raped their white “madams” and the subsequent panic it caused), which in the end provided “enough ideological space for the justification of South Africa’s permanent administration by the European colonist” (Magubane 1997:20).

Butchart (1998:xii) writes that it was only towards the middle of the eighteenth century with the emergence of “missionary medicine” that it was possible to portray the African body “as an object possessed of an interior anatomy”. For the new colonial powers, missionary medicine became a tool of “moral sanitation directed to the boundary between the African body and a surrounding space of customs, rites and superstitions”. He continues that the view in Europe was that the environmental space held various perilous substances that could carry disease into the body. The corresponding view was of “the ‘moral’ space surrounding the African body as harbouring every variety of vice and superstition calculated to corrode its vitality and render it susceptible to sickness” (Butchart 1998:75). He continues that missionary medicine also had to protect this moral space by combating the influence of the witch doctor. Butchart (1998:76) writes that the simple act of medically examining and treating the ill African body became a disciplinary power.

It became possible to view the African as possessing a soul and a body that could be manipulated by medical interventions. Illness became a measure to determine the influence of belief and custom on the individual African body (Butchart 1998:77). A connotation was created between “sin, disease and the heathen body”, with Marley writing in 1860 that “the sickness of the body is a continued type of sin” (Butchart 1998:78). Within “the theatre of healing”, the medical practitioner also became an actor, treating ill Africans while as many Africans as possible looked on (Butchart 1998:79). The spectators had to witness how “the forces of darkness ...had to be made to bow before ‘civilization’ ”. The power of missionary medicine had to be seen “through the doctor, through the catheter and stethoscope, and through the body of the patient whose blood filled the cupping glass” (Butchart 1998:81). For many missionary doctors, the witch doctor who became the patient served as the most formidable demonstration of the “hospital’s power over the heathen”, with Grist (1924)

writing that the purpose of medical missionary enterprises was to lead Africans “from darkness into the light of the Gospel” (Butchart 1998:84). It was only much later that instead of undermining traditional healers, their contribution in communities was recognised as constructive, and their skills included into socio-medical endeavours (Butchart 1998:90).

In his chapter “The ethnography of African straightness”, Marc Epprecht (2008:36) writes that the earliest accounts of sexuality and gender originated from European travellers to West Africa. In the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta wrote about female nakedness and the shocking familiarity between Muslim women and men. Many of these accounts were about fertility in African cultures, polygyny, the lack of sexual modesty and shame, the subservience of women, and how easily accessible they were to men. Epprecht (2008:37) writes that these early descriptions reflected the high value that was placed on heterosexual marriage and procreation, and the subservience of individual sexual desire to the broad interest of the family and tribe. Incidents of same-sex behaviour were noted in accounts from the beginning of the sixteenth century. He refers to the work of Sir Richard Burton (1885), who referred to an earlier Portuguese document dating from 1558 that mentioned the “unnatural damnation” among the Kongo. In 1590, Andrew Battell, who lived in Angola (among the Imbangala) noted that “they have men in women’s apparel, whom they keep among their wives”. Jean Baptiste Labat also referred to a caste of cross-dressing male diviners in Angola. In European culture, these accounts were used as examples of African perversity.

Epprecht (2008:38) argues that “same-sex relationships existed in African societies with a wide range of motives, practices, and emotions involved, including affection and fertility control”. He continues that there was often a ritual importance attached to anal penetration between men. Breaking a strong taboo, however, could bring the one breaking the taboo into contact with powerful spirits. On the other hand, anal penetration under “proper conditions” could bring a fertile crop or good hunting. He refers to Günther Tessen (1921) who wrote about adult, married Pangwe men in the German colony of Cameroon who interpreted acts of anal penetration as “wealth medicine”. Similar accounts hint of African men who expressed same-sex practices in the idioms of traditional medicine or magic. Epprecht (2008:38) writes that the power of the medicine was strengthened by the secrecy of the act. He continues that new research also points to “unspoken, erotic relationships” between African women under the guise of spirit mediumship. Except for some rare accounts of same-sex sexuality, a “collective silence” hung over the topic, a discontinuity which in turn served as proof that

there was no such thing as same-sex relationships in Africa until the white colonists brought it here.

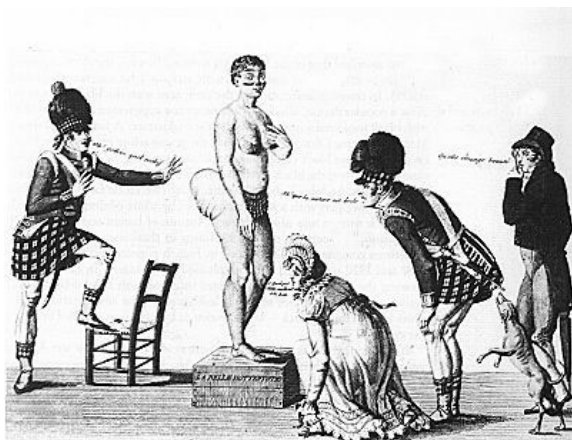
Epprecht (2008:41) argues that the silence was also part of the strategy of colonial administrators and missionaries to shape African sexuality toward their ideal of the civilized, in contrast to “Africans’ barbarous lack of control over heterosexual instincts” and heterosexual immoralities like polygyny, female circumcision, lobola (marriage by cattle), child betrothals, and widow inheritance. Incidents of male-on-male sexual behaviour were rationalised as the result of Africans’ contact with promiscuous outsiders, for example Arabs (Epprecht 2008:42). An example was propaganda by missionaries (1889) who hinted that the king of the Baganda people’s Muslim advisor seduced him into bisexuality, resulting in the sexual abuse and killing of young Christian converts. Epprecht (2008:43) writes that while sodomy has been observed in the Sudan during the time of generals Gordon and Kitchener, it was rationalised to have happened under the decadent influence of the Turco-Circassian rulers of Egypt. He continues that in a commission of enquiry report into “unnatural vice” among mine workers in Johannesburg in 1906/1907, Chinese and Portuguese were listed as possible corrupting elements.

2.1.2 The bodies of black women in the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods

Tamale (2011:15) writes that “the bodies of African women especially worked to buttress and apologise for the colonial project”. She continues that the bodies of black women were juxtaposed with the prude and conservative bodies of Victorian women and labelled as “primitive”. Tamale (2011:16) refers to Goodson (1991) who wrote that religion, particularly Islam and Christianity focussed on the “impurity and inherent sin” correlated to the bodies of women. Black women were encouraged to discard their previous beliefs and norms and adopt the “civilised” ways of the whites by regulating their dress codes and by hiding and covering their body parts. She continues and points to a post-colonial example where the dictators Kamuzu Banda of Malawi and Idi Amin of Uganda introduced draconian laws on women’s dress. Colonialism was essentially a “corporeal enterprise” and there is a difference between feminist, anthropological and critical historical literature that pays attention to “tacit everyday bodiliness of colonial experience” and the more conventional event-orientated scholarship (Boddy 2011:119). She continues that pressure was put on colonial subjects to conform in their daily lives to “civilised” and “normal” behaviour, reflecting the assumptions of

colonisers about the “capacities of black and brown peoples whose physical and social differences have been elaborated for several centuries in all manner of scholarly and popular publications, advertisements and pictorial art”.

One such an advertisement appeared on Thursday, 20 September 1810 in the “Morning Herald” and “Morning Post” announcing the opening of the public exhibition on Piccadilly, London of “The Hottentot Venus” (Holmes 2007:65). This was probably the most prominent body on display of a black woman (as colonial subject) in the nineteenth century and remained so till 1976 when her skeleton and body-cast was removed from public display at the Museum of Natural History in Paris.



Four years later, Stephen Gould accidentally (re)discovered her genitals and brain, kept in bell-jars in the storerooms of the museum (Holmes 2007:169). These were Saartjie Baartman’s remains; she was also known as “The Hottentot Venus”. Handbills and advertisements described her as a natural wonder, a “new specimen of a little-known tribe whose buttocks and suggestively fringed labial Venus apron shaped her mystery” (Holmes 2007:69). In the press she was portrayed by words like “sensual composure, wry humour, deft movement, confrontation, refusal, stoicism” as she played her “ramkie” (descended from the original Khoi gourd), “hummed, strutted, wriggled, sashayed and sang” a repertoire of folksongs in Khoi and Afrikaans, the co-called kitchen-Dutch (Holmes 2007:66). She was adorned with necklaces, belts and ostrich feathers, while her outer garment was “a skimpy mesh of beads and feathers” to accentuate her large bottom and pubic area (Holmes 2007:64). Her face and hair were made up with grease paint, kohl powder, oil, and combs. In this way she had to perform under the supervision of her “foreign manager”, Hendrik Cesars (who she worked for as nursemaid in the Cape), and her “business partner”, Alexander Dunlop, who

smuggled her out of Cape Town where he worked as military Staff Surgeon (Holmes 2007:43). She performed for four hours a day, six days a week. Every day except Sundays she gave exclusive evening private views. Holmes (2007:65) writes that “Venus” was merely a synonym for sex and “Hottentot” referred to everything that made her “other”: “strange, disturbing, culturally alien, sexually deviant and excessive”. Holmes (2007:70) writes that Saartjie Baartman became “the most famous theatrical attraction in Picaddilly” during the juncture of two critical moments in racial attitudes in England. She continues that it was the end of “sentimental primitivism” and the beginning of an era of “the new pseudo-science of ethnology” that went hand in hand with white imperialism, the economic exploitation of colonies, and scientific racism.

After Dunlop died, Baartman and her “manager” Hendrik Cesars arrived in Paris in 1814; slavery was still legal here and a fierce debate raged about race and the human species between Cuvier — the foremost European scientist, and Saint-Hilaire (Holmes 2007:119). To make ends meet, she had to perform ten hours a day, and by the end of 1814 she suffered from a recurrent flu, exhaustion and the “deleterious effects of the brandy she drank to keep going through her performances” (Holmes 2007:128). In January 1815, Cesars sold her act to Réaux, a showman and animal trainer who also served as an “animal resurrectionist” for the Natural History Museum; he forced her to perform for 12 hours every day (Holmes 2007:131). In March 1815, he brought her to the Natural History Museum for three days where Saint-Hilaire, Cuvier and De Blainville, all of whom specialised in comparative anatomy and zoology, expected her to pose naked for an examination, and to be drawn by the museum’s artists (Holmes 2007:137). She eventually relented and as Holmes (2007:142) so poignantly writes, her body “became the territory battled over” by Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire “in their escalating struggle for pre-eminence”. Holmes (2007:140) refers to the debate that has been raging for 250 years on whether the legendary “Hottentot apron” was a product of nature or culture. European travellers construed the legend that “Hottentot” women had a pinny of flesh that concealed the “mons Veneris”, an “apron” that concealed their genitalia. She continues that the argument was that the indigenous people were fundamentally a different species, and that the “Hottentots” were “the missing link in the chain of being between humans and animals, and therefore essentially bestial in nature”.

This theory could only be proved or disproved through examining Baartman’s body. Réaux and the professorial board came to a discreet agreement regarding the board’s interest in the

anatomical dissection of Saartjie Baartman's body should she happen to die (Holmes 2007:152). She died on the night of 29 December 1815 after repeated attacks of flu, bronchitis, a lack of medical attention, and excessive drinking. Her body was delivered to the Natural History Museum the following day, where, under the supervision of Cuvier, a body-cast was made, her body dissected and the disarticulation of her skeleton began (Holmes 2007:156). She continues that Cuvier was "more interested in Saartjie's labia, clitoris, vagina and buttocks than her brain", and it was reported that Cuvier kept the bell-jars with her brain and genitals directly outside the doors of his private apartments (Holmes 2007:162). It was from collections like these that theories about human racial differences were proposed by the pseudo-sciences of ethnography and scientific racism (Holmes 2007:163).

In 1994, Nelson Mandela raised the issue of the return of Saartjie Baartman's remains to South Africa during French President Francois Mitterand's state visit to South Africa. A lengthy negotiation process commenced under the leadership of Professor Phillip Tobias. At first, the director of the Musée de l'Homme and Natural History Museum, Henry de Lumley remarked that the remains would be safer, where they were "cherished in the home of liberty, fraternity and equality, than in South Africa" (Holmes 2007:171). After a vote by the French senate on 29 January 2002 to release the remains, Saartjie Baartman touched African soil again on 3 May 2002 after 187 years (Holmes 2007:175). She was buried in Hankey, a rural town on the banks of the Gamtoos River on 9 August 2002. Holmes (2007:190) concludes the remarkable and tragic story of Saartjie Baartman, writing that "South Africa chose Saartjie as an important ancestor to symbolise the restoration of the dignity and humanity of all its peoples".

Boddy (2011:123) refers to Stoler (1992), who writes that Foucault recognised that racial narratives developed in a colonial context belong to "the technologies of sex that arose in the eighteenth century to regulate sexual conduct and by which populations could be expanded and controlled". She continues that in the European context, humans were regarded as "biological entities", who displayed certain individualised and racial capacities. These biological entities could be controlled, counted, educated, categorised and a certain number assigned per square kilometre. In contrast to this, peoples from the colonies were more "relational than unitary and individualistic". She uses the spirit possession ritual (zar) in Sudan as an example, which holds that more than one person of mind could inhabit a single human body. Britons in colonial Sudan viewed the assertion by Sudanese women that their

bodies could accommodate several animate beings as superstition and irrational (Boddy 2011:124).

She explores another incident of colonial control of the bodies of Sudanese women, through their opposition to the practice of “pharaonic circumcision”, a severe form of circumcision in which “the labia are pared away and remaining skin sewn together to “infibulate” (cover or “veil”) the vaginal opening”. She continues that if there was no attendant to cut through this covering, a woman was likely to die together with her child during childbirth. Colonial officials regarded infibulations as a way to obstruct fertility and in the wake of the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, there was a shortage of labour. These officials, however, were not against female cutting in general. In the 1920s a campaign was launched in Sudan to revise “women’s bodies and their mothering skills”, and to combat the “superstitious” and “backward” nature of Muslim women (Boddy 2011:125). Midwife Training Schools were established to modify student’s sensibilities and by 1921 all midwives were required to obtain licenses and acquire basic supplies, with the final aim to exhort villagers to stop performing “Pharaoh’s circumcision” (Boddy 2011:129). She continues that a “female circumcision crisis” also erupted in Kenya in 1929, with Kikuyu nationalists in revolt against Christian missionaries over female genital cutting; the Church of Scotland Mission insisted that their congregants “pledge opposition to the custom and forbid their daughters to undergo it”. Boddy (2011:132) concludes that in colonial and post-colonial Sudan, the body of a child was prepared to support “its ultimate moral and social role”, with “gender” being the principal organiser to which the body had to conform. She continues that should customary cutting be stopped, it would result in “chaotic relations between the sexes”. She refers to Csordas (1999) who writes that “studies under the rubric of embodiment are not ‘about’ the body *per se*. Instead they are about the culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily-being-in-the world”. She describes the bodily effects of the colonial experience as “complex and participatory, continuously shaped through a series of messy collisions between British and Sudanese heartfelt convictions and implicit ideals”.

Flora Veit-Wild (1999) traces the way in which African women writers navigate the space between the colonial and postcolonial situation, in which the body is an important touchstone between the inner and outer world. Referring to the creation myths of the Saroma, she writes that a woman is portrayed with a bleeding wound, with pain in her body, a mutilated man or blamed as the source of evils in the world. The exception is the creation myth of the Ekoi of

Nigeria, where women accepted man as compensation for the woman they had lost, and resulted in men becoming the servants of women (Veit-Wild 1999:173). She continues that “the body can be seen as metaphoric as well as metonymic for the position of woman in society, for her self-definition, her subjectivity, her power”. In pre-colonial society the body had been regarded as part of the cosmos and community — an example of this expression is in the dance of the Yaka women of Zaire. She refers to the work of Jackson and Karp (1990) in considering the linkage of feminine characteristics in African society, and bodily metaphors, for example, where thought is associated with heart, and where heart as a feminine metaphor is connected to “hearth and home, heritage and *communitas*”.

Veit-Wild (1999:174) is interested in finding out what happened to the body of a woman in colonial Rhodesia, when she became separated from the collective body, a process of individuation and separation of the self and other. Women had to conform to social stereotypes and their bodies were often “equated to a map of colonised space”. They were not supposed to follow their own head — a fairy tale from West Africa tells the story of a beautiful woman who was not allowed to go to the market place, which is an important public space. She subsequently cut off her nose and went to the market place. Traditional communities offered some degree of protection to women, but this was compromised when people started to move to the city, and with the onset of colonisation. In the city, women were subjected to the sexual advances of men. While a woman could lead her own life, she was also denounced as a woman of low morals or a prostitute. An independent woman was often stigmatised in African literature; her body was associated with infertility and anorexia, which was in contrast with the traditional corpulent African body (Veit-Wild 1999:176). Veit-Wild refers to the novel, “*Nervous Conditions*” by Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangaremba (1998), who remarks that the colonialists brought hygiene, a value that was internalised by “good Africans”, and concludes that “only through physical auto-aggression of bodily, oral, [and] sexual desires does the black woman gain insight into the mechanism which control her; this recognition makes her author of her own life. Woman first has to find her mouth, her voice before she can restore her body” (Veit-Wild 1999:180).

Naledi Ribane explores the notion of beauty from a black perspective, and writes about the importance that “lightness” of skin gained in traditional communities as part of a colonial value system (Ribane 2006:12). She refers to a song sung by Sepedi, Setswane and Sesotho speakers in South Africa: “Come out and behold, the bride is so pretty she looks Coloured”;

later, the word 'Coloured' was replaced by 'star' (Ribane 2006:19). Ribane remarks that "being skinny is not considered sexy in African culture", and that in traditional societies a girl was considered beautiful when she was well-fed and healthy. She writes that many Africans regard bums as a sensuous feature and that "to be considered desirable, a girl needs to have that specifically rounded 'African heritage'" (Ribane 2006:20). She refers to a variety of traditional dances where there is an innuendo to the rounded posterior and it usually entails teasing and using the behind to flirt during the dance.

Bakare-Yusuf (2011:116) writes about the legislation introduced in Nigeria in 2008 "to ban and criminalise women's sartorial choice". Some universities prohibit women from wearing trousers, or any clothing which leaves too much of the female body bare. She continues that this issue had become a platform to debate social and moral decay in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. It is ironic that those in favour of restricting the way women dress, blame Western influence as the source of moral degeneration even though there are Nigerian customs and festivals in which certain forms of nakedness are allowed (Bakare-Yusuf 2011:121). She writes that the issue of policing the way women dress in Nigeria, should be seen in the larger context, that is, the existential insecurity and poverty of women. Because of this economic disadvantage, "most women become more dependent on their bodies and sexual relations with men ranging from legal marriage to literal prostitution" (Bakare-Yusuf 2011:125). She argues that the issue of "indecent dressing" should be placed in the context of social and economic inequality that compels women to enter into coercive relationships "rather than trying to restrict women's agency and mobility by resorting to moralistic arguments".

Lewis (2011:206) points out that these attempts to control women's bodies are embedded in notions of the "sexualised and degenerate female body", and such a female body has the potential to pollute the "healthy" national body politic. One of the most visible mechanisms in post-colonial Africa to maintain control over women's bodies are by way of customary law and practices, such as virginity testing and female genital mutilation (Lewis 2011:212). She continues that through these customs and law, "aggressive male heterosexual behaviour" is reframed as "the legitimate heterosexual response of 'normal' African men". Examples of these legitimate responses are the institution of polygamy and communally sanctioned verbal abuse and disciplining. By policing the bodies of younger women through customary practices, older women maintain the power to control youth and enact the dominance of older women in a patriarchal society (Lewis 2011:213).

In the same line, Mire (2000:1) writes that the female body became a symbolic space through which asymmetrical power relations between African men and women were contested, based on the political and social ideas of African males. She argues that “the colonial contest between white patriarchal colonizers and colonized African men included a contest over the possession of women’s bodies”. The bodies of African women were used as nannies, servants and concubines. The sexual behaviour of African men and women were categorised as pathological if it did not fit colonial objectives. Examples of such pathological behaviour included polygamy and female circumcision. On the other hand, sexual affairs between African women and European men were hushed over, and even less was said about homosexual relationships or the exploitation of labour by colonising Europeans (Mire 2000:16). African men and women have been labelled by vocabularies expressing sexual excess, bestiality and bodily deviance, but gender became a way of further marginalising and “othering” the bodies of African women (Lewis 2011:205). Even though the political power in South Africa has shifted to a black majority, “gender power remains in the hands of men” (Morrell 2001:6).

2.1.3 The bodies of males in southern Africa

Ouzgane (2002:243) writes that the growing field of masculinity studies also aims to improve our understanding of the construction of the African male body and African masculinity in specific historical, social and cultural contexts, and how African males themselves participate in constructing their masculinity. Morrell (2001:4) writes about “the volatility of gender change”, meaning that masculinity is not something fixed, but can change. Furthermore, the masculinity of men differs from each other. He refers to the work of the Australian sociologist, Bob Connell who argues that power is conferred simply by being a man, although not all men share in this power. He demonstrated that men do not only oppress women, but also dominate and subordinate other men. This kind of masculinity is hegemonic, “one that dominated other masculinities and which succeeded in creating prescriptions of masculinity which were binding (or at least partially so), and which created cultural images of what it meant to be a ‘real man’” (Morrell 2001:7). This hegemonic masculinity works on mechanisms that legitimise the men’s power and create a gender consensus; it does not rely on force. Gender discourses are complexly constructed through media, places and people. However, not all men and boys are free to choose their image of masculinity.

Morrell (2001:10) continues that the understanding of a man's own masculinity is strongly influenced by race and class. Referring to Staples' (1982) work about black masculinity in the United States of America, he points out that the unintended consequence of feminism was making the problems of black men invisible and depriving them of a voice to state their case". In Britain, black masculinity was considered to be in the minority and findings have shown "young black men developing counter-cultural expression and a bodily toughness that speaks of resistance to condescension" (Morrell 2001:11). This is an example of what Morrell (2001:8) refers to as "the micro aspects of masculinity", where the body becomes a prime bearer of the values and symbolism of masculinity". An analysis by Connell (1991) of working class masculinity, has indicated that the dangerous and hopeless manner in which young unemployed whites in Australia viewed themselves and behaved, were influenced by the lack of distinct life opportunities and the process of becoming a working class "lad" (Morrell 2001:11).

"Masculinity and violence have been yoked together in South African history" (Morell 2001:12). In southern Africa, brutal policies were implemented in former Rhodesia since the nineteenth century based on notions of racist superiority. Very little had been written about the Indians who arrived in South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to work on the sugar plantations in Natal as indentured labourers (Vahed 2005:239). He refers to their inbetweenness as "indentured masculinity" since they were "not white" and "not black", and maintained strong ties with the culture of the Indian subcontinent. He writes that the brutal conditions of their work environment made them susceptible to violence and made them violent towards women (Vahed 2005:252). There was very little contact between Indians and Africans in the first decades, but it changed when Africans started to replace Indians as labourers in the beginning of the twentieth century (Vahed 2005:253). He continues that even then, their contact was defined by mistrust and tension, since Africans were used by the colonial administrators to find Indian deserters and beat them. Indentured labour was abolished in 1911 and by then most whites were unsympathetic towards Indians. Vahed (2005:254) refers to a "settler masculinity" where white settlers discriminated against other men based on class, occupation, fortune, family lineage, race and ethnicity.

A recent example of the continued discrimination against Indians is found in a column in the City Press newspaper by Phumlani Mfeka, who addressed a letter to Afzul Rehman, the mayor of New Castle offering him a "warning not to grandstand against an African person in

the way you did to the traffic official who innocently mistook you for one of the Gupta brothers”. This letter was in reaction to the mayor who laid a charge against a traffic officer for calling him “a Gupta” (in South Africa, the Gupta family is controversial, and have close ties with President Jacob Zuma). Mfeka continued that “first and foremost, you are an Indian and, contrary to what you believe...South Africa is an African country with its land in its totality and proportion rightfully belonging to its indigenous African people” (Evans 2013). In response, Rehman wrote a letter stating: “I see myself as a South African first and then secondly as a person of Indian origin whose roots in South Africa can be traced back four generations...it is clear that the writer does not fully understand the history of Indians in this country and the role they have played to bring democracy to South Africa” (Munusamy 2013).

Two fundamental experiences shaped the borders of masculinity in South Africa in the beginning of the twentieth century, namely impoverished rural life, and the workplace (primarily mines). Colonialism not only destroyed the basis of traditional African communities, but also tore apart the history of gendered rituals upon which sexual division of labour and male power was based. An example of the debasement and discipline exercised by mining houses on black African bodies was the “heat tolerance test” and the mine medical examination. Butchart (1998:93) refers to Dreosti (1935) who describes the “heat tolerance test” as a way to “assess African mine workers’ capacity to withstand the heat and humidity that prevailed underground, and which induced in some instances a ‘hyper-pyrexial’ type of ‘heat stroke’”. The aim was to modify the African body to prevent this reaction. Butchart continues that an experimental chamber was reconstructed imitating conditions with steam and heat and two trays of rock. Dreosti describes how Africans were stripped naked, and under supervision of a “boss boy” (to ensure constant work), lined up along a tray and used shovels to pass the load of rocks from one man to the next, until all of it lay in a pile to one side of the tray. A medical officer measured and recorded their temperature after the first half-hour, and again after the second half-hour. From there, the workers were moved to a cooling chamber where their temperatures were measured again after an hour.

Butchart (1998:94) argues that in addition to “fabricating a new physiology”, it was “a ritual of debasement that demonstrated the mining industry’s power over its African recruits”; it also served as “an instrument of discipline”. He refers to Moodie (1976) who wrote that the imposed nakedness and other conditions were “unnecessary, except as a way of initiating the

miners into a subculture which is deprived of any values about human dignity”. The mine medical examination also served to debase workers. Butchart (1998:99) writes that until the 1940s these medical screenings formed part of a strategy to confine “diseased Africans to the ‘native territories’”.

From the 1900s to the 1970s, recruits were paraded and inspected in batches, making it easy to identify individuals who did not measure up to the set standard for each group (Butchart 1998:101). Bodily defects included “weak chest”, “flabby muscles and loose skin”, and “weight under 105 pounds”. A chalk mark on the chest of a native indicated that he merited further investigation. Butchart (1998:102) describes the procedure as “dressage”, suggesting that the examiners subdued the will of Africans to obedience. The interplay between the body and power in the mining industry explains the “success in defining the roles of dominator and dominated”, as well as the resistance shown by social scientists and the Africans examined (Butchart 1998:103). The barrack system also served to divorce mine workers from their families. Butchart (1998:106) writes that “complementing this individualizing system of isolation within the dormitories, compounds were also partitioned along ethnic lines”. Butchart (1998:108) concludes that examination of recruits remains an integral part of the mining industry although it is done in more sophisticated ways with the subtle message that miners may also resist or manipulate the examination. The compounds which were under constant surveillance have been replaced by ‘mine villages’ with park-like surroundings and better living quarters. Butchart refers to Poster (1990) who writes that these mining villages have a system of surveillance “without windows, towers, walls or guards”; it has been replaced by swipe cards and bar codes that monitor the movement of each miner below and above ground. The “intensity, intimacy and invisibility of the monitoring gaze” has increased despite the fact that the importance of sovereign power as a way to control the individual and social bodies of the miners has been decreased (Butchart 1998:108).

On 16 August 2012, 34 miners were shot dead and 78 wounded by police during a wildcat strike at the Lonmin-owned Marikana platinum mine in North West province, South Africa (De Waal 2012). Comparisons have been made between this tragedy and the shooting of ten students by police at Sharpeville in 1960, although Marikana was basically a dispute about remuneration and living conditions and a power struggle between two rival mining unions (Sorensen 2012:871). Because of a housing shortage at the mine, many mine workers lived with their families in squatter camps where municipal services were basic or non-existent

(Sorenson 2012:872). He continues that this discontent about living conditions and low wages, as well as the disillusionment with their trade unions led to the tragic event. It seems the battle for power between mining companies and trade unions, and between the trade unions themselves is still fought on the battleground of mineworkers' bodies. In his blog "Constitutionally speaking", Pierre de Vos, professor of Constitutional Law makes the provocative statement that not many people were concerned about the dehumanising effect of publishing pictures of the 34 dead bodies (De Vos 2013). He writes: "After all, in our racist society, black bodies and the blood of black people (especially working class black people who are not famous) are seldom valued as highly as white bodies and the blood of white people (especially blond, famous, white people)". This is in reaction to the outcry and "horror" in sectors of society to pictures published of the scene where the athlete, Oscar Pistorius supposedly shot and killed his blond, model girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.

Morrell (2001:13) writes that any idealism of racial integration disappeared in the 1920s and 1930s with South African society becoming increasingly racially divided. African men in urban areas worked under dangerous and challenging conditions while paid low wages. New forms of masculinity were forged, based on ideas of work and ethnicity. Referring to the work of Guy and Thabane (1988), Morrell (2001:14) writes that Sotho men working on the mines formed the "Sotho masculinity" that promoted the idea that all Sotho men were prepared to do dangerous mine work and were physically tough. In the 1930s, racial homogeneity was promoted between Afrikaans and English speakers based on, for example, compulsory and free education for whites. Some Afrikaner men, however, formed a "Republican masculinity". This was based on a new Afrikaner nationalism that developed because of English South Africans' continued dominance in the political and economic spheres. Morrell (2001:15) describes this 'Republican masculinity' as a modernised form of ethnic masculinity, built on the notion of racial superiority over blacks, and a desire for freedom from the British. This masculinity put the focus on "the importance of independence, resourcefulness, physical and emotional toughness, (the) ability to give and ...take orders, of being moral and God-fearing". However, this masculinity later turned into an established masculinity that was unforgiving, unapologetic, and authoritarian. Van der Watt (2007:107) cites Du Pisani (2001) who writes that "hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was intrinsically bound up with the social and political power of Afrikaner society and hence with Afrikaner nationalism". This Afrikaner or Republican silenced or stigmatised alternative masculinities, aided by the socio-political power of the apartheid regime. Van der Watt (2007:108) once

again cites Du Pisani (2001) who describes the character of the Afrikaner masculinity as follows: “It took an unyielding Protestant view based on ‘pure’ New Testament principles, and rigid austerity and strictness in conduct and morals.” Initially this puritan ideal of Afrikaner masculinity found expression in the image of the simple, honest, religious, stable and hardworking *boer* (farmer).” According to Van der Watt (2007:110) hegemonic Afrikaner or Republican masculinity essentially remained the same throughout the apartheid period. Then renunciation of political power in 1994 caused huge changes in Afrikaner society. He continues that there are less and less Afrikaner men in public power and they are becoming less influential in the public arena. Neither does Afrikaner masculinity anymore present the ideal prototype for other men in South African society. Van der Watt (2007:110) writes that “elements of the formal puritan hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity is still present (it is understandable), but with the death of apartheid and the depletion of Afrikaner nationalism the economic and/or political support which was necessary for the Afrikaner masculinity to rule like before, is non-existent.”

Apartheid policy regulated the black population. The black worker was exploited and brutalised in the manufacturing industry, while trade unions and government afforded them nearly no protection. In the townships created under apartheid, masculinity was rooted in violence and crime, especially among youths and gangs. Morrell (2001:17) writes that gender identity was influenced through manipulation of race and class, which created social distance between citizens from different races. He concludes that all this could explain the chauvinistic nature of South African men which supported the oppression of women and the authority, and presumption of male power. “The country’s history also produced brittle masculinities — defensive and prone to violence”, with white men becoming defensive about challenges to their position of privilege, and a dangerous edge to black men, whose masculinity is based on poverty and “the emasculation of political powerlessness” (Morrell 2001:18). Gender values in post-1994 South Africa are changing. During the struggle, violence was necessary and noble. Now it is criminal and destructive. Morrell (2001:21) writes that young men have chosen violence in the changing political landscape and are now considered to be criminals rather than heroes. He refers to the work of Wood and Jewkes and writes that the “unavailability of work, an essential part of working class masculinities around the world, placed greater emphasis on heterosexual activity, which confirmed gender power inequalities, fuelling gender violence... and confirmed the vulnerability and pain that African township youth experience” (Morrell 2001:22).

Masculinities are in transition in South Africa. Van der Watt (2007:77) writes that more men are becoming involved with the issue of gender equality, similar to the struggle against Apartheid. An example is the co-called “men’s marches” organised by ADAPT (Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training), the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) and the South African Men’s Forum (SAMF) where thousands of men took to the streets from 1997 onwards refuting in public the violence perpetrated by men against women and children. Civil society and government organisations demonstrated a larger commitment to increase the involvement of men in promoting gender equality. Van der Watt & Louw (2012:354) writes that where men in the past have often been portrayed as the perpetrators of violence, they are now also seen as victims and in this sense they are “captives between traditional and new ideas and perceptions about masculinity”. The mass-media plays a crucial role in the depiction of stereotypes about gender and their description of gender is now much more complex than before (Van der Watt & Louw 2012:361). While South Africa is often depicted one of the last “bastions of chauvinism” and isolated aspects of masculinity is held up as being representative of all men, Van der Watt & Louw (2012:364) holds the opinion that in large parts of South Africa “very few men are truly caring and mindful of their intimate relationships regarding the way they treat vulnerable people like women and children, specifically in township communities”.

Van der Watt (2007:93) writes that changes in the composition of the labour force both in the domestic and political domains are compelling men to negotiate new notions of masculinity and manhood. He continues that the post-apartheid policies, especially after the inauguration of the first democratic government in 1994 have compelled masculinities in South Africa to adapt their original position. The changes in the political landscape in the 1990’s resulted in the empowerment of women, but former masculinities lost its foothold in the new democratic South Africa (Van der Watt 2007:104). He continues that the “top dogs” in the previous political domain, mainly white heterosexual, Afrikaner middle-class and upper-class men were displaced by the “under dogs”, mainly heterosexual black and coloured men, as well as women from the lower middle and working class. Van der Watt (2007: 105) refers to Thokozani Xaba (2001) who describe the masculinity of these “under dogs” (young African males during apartheid) as a ‘struggle masculinity’, and in contemporary South Africa as a ‘post-struggle masculinity’. He continues that during the struggle against apartheid many of these young men were trained to use force, but all of a sudden there was no place for these skills in the post-apartheid democracy which requires order and respect for the law and its

various government institutions. This 'struggle masculinity' distinguished by honour, social respect (earned through violent deeds) and a certain status in the community were suddenly sidelined with the expectation of "a non-violent, non-sexist, peaceable masculinity" (Van der Watt 2007:106). Many of these "under dogs" desperately tried to hold on to what was familiar to them, seeking affirmation from each other within the context of a close-knit 'family of choice' and often they became members of criminal gangs committing criminal acts ranging from assault to rape and murder. Ironically "they turned on the communities that they were trained to protect and used their skills and weaponry against community members in order to extract resources from them" (Van der Watt 2007:106). He continues that these "under dogs" were abandoned socially, politically and economically and at the end, they established areas of influence where "their word is law".

White men are facing challenges in the political and economic sphere where blacks are taking over and where gays are flaunting their sexuality in public spaces. Morrell (2001:26) identifies three categories of responses to these changes — defensive, accommodating, and responsive. In the first category, the aim is to restore. It leads to the question whether this may be an explanation for the high incidents of rape in South Africa, and the occurrence of "corrective rape" in townships in an effort to make real women out of lesbians? The accommodating response builds upon the restoration of traditional family values in an attempt to resurrect non-violent masculinities, where the ideal of manhood is "responsible, respectful and wise" (Morrell 2001:29). The responsive response is mainly built upon the emancipation of masculinities, and this is most visible in the gay movement. It is an attempt to challenge violent masculinities and to develop new ways of being men. The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) of the 1980s opposed the conscription of young white men in the South African Defence Force, and was a visible effort to offer "a non-violent, anti-authoritarian vision of masculinity for young white men" (Morrell 2001:31). He concludes that although violence in South Africa may be linked to social attempts to deal with feelings of emasculation and loss of power and status, there are "discourses of peace" which "will push South African men in the direction of emancipatory masculinity" (Morrell 2001:33). Van der Watt (2007:94) refers to Lemon (1991) who argues that "the increased visibility of homosexuality in South Africa, has begun to implicitly question the assumption of heterosexual masculinity", manifesting in the so-called 'flight from masculinity' characterised by more men adopting a homosexual life-style.

In his book, *Heterosexual Africa?* Marc Epprecht (2008:11) asks the question why there is such a “durability of silences, stereotypes and stigma against same-sex sexuality in Africa” among scholars and gender and human rights activists, especially if these denials expose young Africans to unsafe sexual practices and hamper the struggle against HIV/AIDS? He mentions, for example, that the word “homosexuality” still does not describe truly the majority of men or women who have sex with someone of their own gender, since it is a word that arose from “a specific history of scientific enquiry, social relations, and political struggle that did not historically exist in Africa” (Epprecht 2008:8). He suspects that “something far subtler than homophobia appears to be at play” to explain the violence and hatred against lesbians and gays in Africa, and suggests that this violence could be a displacement of misogyny; or anger at forms of marginalisation among young African men (Epprecht 2008:12).

Heterosexism is at play. It assumes that the norms and social ideals of heterosexual reproduction, sexual attraction and marriage is a natural phenomenon, inherent to normal humans and not historical or social. By categorising lesbians, gays and transsexuals as an “insignificant minority”, it serves to disguise other prejudices in society, including xenophobia, tribalism, racism, and sexism (Epprecht 2008:17). He continues that a heterosexual mindset discourages the asking of questions that will challenge “presumptions of normality”, so that silence and self-censorship ensue. Epprecht (2008:25) refers to two concepts in the work of the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld to try and understand the silences and innuendo concerning non-normative sexuality, namely “cultural intimacy” and “social poetics”. Herzfeld describes “those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality” as “cultural intimacy”. There is also the phenomenon of “self-stereotyping”, which is employed to engage with power (resisting, sidling up or exercising power) in complex and ironic ways. This is referred to as “social poetics”.

Lewis (2011:211) asks the question why so many African leaders have demonised and criminalised homosexuality and writes that narratives about “national belonging have been anchored in familial scripts and the invention of nations as biological families”. Another way of intimidating non-normative sexualities, is what Lewis calls “the performative deployment of power” (Lewis 2011:211). She continues that in an effort to appeal to the notion of “African authenticity”, political leaders like Jacob Zuma and Robert Mugabe have aligned

them with practices that are considered to be African. She continues that in this way the “paternal authority” of these leaders becomes an indication of the pride of the group and “ascendant manhood has come to signify the reclaimed pride of the entire community”. As a consequence the reverence of men’s pre-eminence in the family and wider community is achieved through the complicity of both women and men. Epprecht (2008:131) argues that Western authors from various disciplines have contributed to a conception of “an African sexuality that was almost exclusively determined by or structured around reproduction and family”. If any same-sex sexuality was recognised at all, it was blamed on exotic and un-African outside influences. He continues that this idea of African heterosexuality was so powerful in scientific scholarship that with the onslaught of AIDS in the 1980s, scholars only made a dutiful enquiry into alternative lifestyles. African scholars supported this consensus (of African heterosexuality) “whether from ignorance, homophobic disapproval, or simply conformity to the dominant academic standard”. Any evidence to the contrary by African scholars was also seen as an offense against African dignity in the light of African nationalist sentiments.

Epprecht (2008:163) writes that a more sophisticated discourse emerged which “celebrated Africa’s hugeness and cultural diversity...and the importance of specific historical experiences”, but the subtext remained that there is an absence of homosexuality in the traditional cultures of true Africans and an intolerance towards it. Epprecht (2008:167) concludes that the notion of “African sexuality” is deeply harmful and misleading. He strikingly writes that “even when deployed to argue against colonial stereotypes and even when qualified by nods toward the diversity of African cultures — it denies real diversity, nuance, imagination, creativity, and change over time”. He continues that “same-sex sexuality matters in Africa” since it also exposes how African cultures ignore, stigmatise or honour non-normative sexuality; how, in the past, colonial institutions, and more recently capitalist institutions define and control, and channel African sexualities to maximise their ability to exploit African labour; how African leaders exploit same-sex sexuality to promote their own political, theological or intellectual agendas; how evangelical Christians and Islam supported or challenged normative traditions; how African artists challenged cultural intimacy; and how same-sex education is denied to a majority of Africans because of “misguided homophobic fears and heterosexual blindness” (Epprecht 2008:169).

Van der Watt (2007:97) refers to Richter and Morrell (2006) who writes that some men in South Africa are reassessing their conception of fatherhood. One way of doing this is to insist on the rights for fathers through e.g. a men's rights organisation like the Promise Keepers which also holds a anti-feminism stance. Van der Watt (2007:98) writes that the two factors to consider in South Africa are the high levels of unemployment which continues to affect especially young black men in townships and rural areas and citing Morell (1998), "the historical legacy of racial emasculation by which African men were infantilised".

Lewis (2011:214) writes that subversive representations of African bodies and sexualities are flourishing and shows the huge potential for "rethinking and reconceptualising sexualities in Africa", but it is a misconception to attribute this development purely to the exposure of Africans to modernity and liberal rights, since Western modernity and rights have frequently strengthened conservative and harmful representations. Even before colonialism, contemporary alternative depictions were represented in the bodily experiences and sexual identities of men and women in diverse African contexts (Lewis 2011:215). She continues that contemporary representations of sexual identities are part of a long tradition, and that "neither gender oppression nor sexual taboos were invented by colonialism..... pre-colonial African societies exhibited numerous examples of repressive and coercive constructions of bodies and sexuality".

2.2 The body during apartheid and in apartheid theology

Perceptions of the body as discussed in previous sections have overlapped with perceptions of the body during apartheid. It was, however quite difficult to find literature on the subject of the body during apartheid, and so I shifted the focus of this section to the depiction of the body by artists during apartheid. Included are some insights concerning the body that came to the fore during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, and an analysis of the body in apartheid theology.

2.2.1 The depiction of the body during apartheid

Peffer (2009:41) writes that "South African artists have long used the image of the human body in distress as a sign of the inhumane conditions in their society". He continues that abused bodies became a common sight in the 1970s and that in the art of this decade the

human body was often portrayed through “animal transformations” as a way to designate how “this everyday brutality of apartheid was internalized and how it might be exorcised”. Artists confronted the viewer with potent questions about the relationship between “corporeal experience to ideas about animality, community, and the sacred”.

Before the official onset on apartheid in 1948 with the election of the National Party into government, there was a response to modernity as impressed by European colonialism. Peffer (2009:6) writes that white South African artists “looked to local cultures as a means to indigenize their engagement with modernist ideas” and at the same time confirm their superior minority status in a colonial context. He continues that black artists tend to “illustrate the lives of cosmopolitan educated Africans”, referring to John Koenakeefe Mohl who taught easel painting from his home in Sophiatown in the 1940s and who declared that his art would ensure that “the world...realize that black people are human beings”. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 was aimed at keeping ethnic communities separate and to keep the black people subservient; Hendrik Verwoerd, architect of apartheid, declared that “there is no place for the Native in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour” (Peffer 2009:24). The ensuing “township art” mirrored the assumptions that white South Africans wanted to foster around black South Africans. Peffer (2009:33) refers to Ivor Powell who explained these assumptions in township art by way of the “primitivisation of the human figure; thus the exaggeratedly African look as an immediate token of indifference; thus the absence of technology and progress; thus the emphasis on music and dancing as rendering blacks as creatures of feeling rather than thought; thus the overwhelming picture of the township dweller as being helpless, in need of guidance from whites”.

Apartheid ideology became further embedded in South African society during the 1950s and 1960s through a range of apartheid laws, at a time when other African states were gaining independence from their former colonial masters (Peffer 2009:48). He continues to give a brief overview of the workings of the apartheid machinery: the National Party introduced a variety of laws classifying the people of South Africa according to race, forbidding sexual relations across the racial divide, creating an inferior “Bantu Education” system, demanding separate facilities according to race, compelling all adult non-whites to carry a registration book or “Dompas” that listed their employment history and movements, and labelled opposition politics as communist treason. In Kliptown, Soweto opposition groups drew up the Freedom Charter in 1955, which was meant to serve as a blueprint for democracy based

on the principle of non-racialism and the eradication of poverty. A protest against the Dompas arranged by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in Sharpeville on 21 March 1960 resulted in 67 people killed, and 186 wounded by police. (Peffer 2009:48). The ANC and PAC were banned by the apartheid state and their leaders fled into exile. By 1963, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other ANC leaders had been captured and were serving life sentences in prison.

Peffer (2009:53) writes that “Black Power art and euphoric pop songs” were popular among the youth of South Africa before and after the 1976 Soweto uprising. He continues that on 16 June 1976 students marched in protest against the compulsory learning of Afrikaans in black schools. The police eventually fired gunshots at the children and in the aftermath hundreds of children were killed in the unrest that spread to other townships. Peffer (2009:56) writes that “thousands of other children of the ‘Class of ’76’ also fled the country”. They joined the ANC in exile and received military training and higher education in support of the struggle; this was the start of “a new generation of mass resistance”. Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa was arrested on 18 August 1977 in the Eastern Cape and transported to Port Elizabeth where he was viciously beaten by police. He received a severe blow to the head, and was transported to Pretoria where he was left to die in a cell, handcuffed and naked (Peffer 2009:57). The apartheid government claimed that he died from a hunger strike, but autopsy reports indicated that he died of a traumatic brain injury. It was primarily exiled ANC leaders who controlled the organisation of the struggle, while in South Africa, “white intellectuals and activists also contributed to the struggle within the non-racial principles of the Freedom Charter” (Peffer 2009:60). While most of the political leaders were in exile or jailed, Desmond Tutu continued to fiercely speak out against apartheid and as Nelson Mandela later wrote, he became “public enemy number one” in the eyes of most white South Africans. He received death threats and survived attempts on his life (Allen 2013:xiii).

The artist Ezrom Legae was distraught about the Steve Biko saga and in response started his series of chicken drawings “that dissected and made zoomorphic the tragedy of torture, murder, and confinement to which Biko and thousands of other South Africans were being subjected” (Peffer 2009:57). He continues that these were no heroic images but rather “encoded the pathetic tragedy that befell hundreds of black schoolchildren, in the figure of fragile domestic fowl”.



In 1984, Legae stated that he used the chicken as a symbol of black people, that “one can maim a chicken by pulling out its feathers; one can crucify him, and even kill him. But beware...there will always be another chicken” (Peffer 2009:58).

Another striking image is the mixed-media work by Paul Stopforth in 1981, titled “Elegy” (for Steve Biko), where the body of Steve Biko is laid on a coroner’s metal tray, floating in a field of red “as if blood has drained out and has stained the surrounding rectangle”(Peffer 2009:62).



Peffer (2009:63) writes that in Stopforth’s image, the body of Steve Biko has all life drained from it “leaving in death only the animal side of the man”. He continues that the human side of the victim is absent and replaced by “the instrumental display of a beaten corpse”, arranged to arouse indignation. It is a powerful statement about the barbarism that was committed during apartheid, but also about the “heroism of those who dared to resist, and

about the vulnerability of all South Africans to statutory repression and physical violation” (Peffer 2009:63).

One of the most disturbing pieces of art is the installation of Jane Alexander titled “The Butcher Boys”, which was exhibited for the first time in 1986 at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg.



Peffer (2009:65) describes the group as “horrifically menacing, but their wounded look is also seductive”. He writes that they are the three graces of apartheid, their “zoomorphic transformation” meant “to evoke the psychological inscription of daily cruelties and hypocrisies inflicted, and self-inflicted” on the citizens of South Africa. He continues that Alexander appeals to “sanity in a society gone sick under forty years of a hyper-rational authoritarian regime”. The installation is a demonstration of the “sinister, inhuman, and amoral nature” of the whole apartheid society. The entire society is depicted as a monstrosity.

A well-known attempt to clear society of these monstrosities after the end of apartheid in 1994, was made in the form of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the chairmanship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The horror people felt at stories of perpetrators drinking and having a barbecue while burning the body of a struggle activist, and the opinion that such perpetration could only come from monsters was met by the following response from Tutu (2013:43) when he wrote that “yes indeed, these people were guilty of monstrous, even diabolical, deeds on their own submission, but — and this was an important *but* — that

did not turn them into monsters or demons. To have done so would mean that they could not be held morally responsible for their deeds. Monsters have no moral responsibility". One of the aims of the TRC was to achieve "restorative justice" — the main purpose was to restore, to heal, and not to punish (Tutu 2013:42). He continues that one of the tenets of restorative justice is that even the perpetrators are essentially human and possess an inherent goodness, that "even the worst of us still remains a child of God with the potential to become better, someone to be salvaged, to be rehabilitated, not to be ostracized but ultimately to be reintegrated into the community". He writes that "Ubuntu" never gives up on any person (Tutu 2013:44). Ubuntu is a Xhosa expression which is difficult to render in another language, but which basically means that "a person is a person through other persons", that "my humanity is caught up and bound up inextricably with yours" (Tutu 2013:22). The TRC obtained information on the location of secret graves through amnesty applications whereafter the remains of abductees were exhumed. Tutu (2013:45) recounts an incident where the family of one of the victims stood at his grave with his remains, when a young man exclaimed: "that's my brother. I bought him those shoes". He continues that they were now able to give him a decent burial and that the process of healing could begin, writing that "until then I had not known that truth could be such a potent healer".

Bethlehem (2006:78) explores how the TRC produced "consensual narratives of the apartheid past" and how the body repeatedly featured in these narratives. She refers to the notion of "body-politics-as-system" that is passed back to the trope of "system-as-body", which in turn devolves back to "the body as the body of the victim". She continues that the TRC laid claim to the idea of "the nation as a physical body, a generically South African...individual". The corpse or remains of the victims of apartheid became the "privileged site of intersection" when witnesses appealed to corporeal violations given the way in which victims' bodies were violated (Bethlehem 2006:78). She writes that the "descriptions, representations and conflicts around bodies in various states of mutilation, dismemberment, and internment within the terror of the past" were the "visual core" of the TRC (Bethlehem 2006:82). Family members repeatedly pleaded for the remains or body parts of their loved ones, "making their visibility, recovery and repossession a metaphor for the settlement of the past of apartheid". Tutu (2013:44) recalls the anguished pleas of a mother of one of the victims who disappeared: "Please, can't you find me even a bone of my child so that I can give even only that a decent burial."

The “moral signature” of the TRC was the employment of two visual “tools”, namely the practice of exhumation and “of one body *held by another*” (Bethlehem 2006:83). She continues that “the scar put on display before the commission, locate the self as the site of violation”. The exposure of the scar in public also became an act of purification and a purging of the social body (Bethlehem 2006:84). The focus on the body during the TRC hearings delivered a “mnemonic production” where the surface of the body became a site of memory. The sight of the violated body allowed the body to be “stabilised as the site of memory” (Bethlehem 2006:85). The pain of the body is shared. Bethlehem (2006:89) refers to Vera Das who writes that a response to this call of pain from another body is to move away from “the singularity of the body-in-pain”, that “the experience of pain cries out for this response of the possibility that my pain could reside in your body”. This idea ties in with the theological reflection of Ganzevoort (2008:24) who puts forward a reinterpretation of scars as stigmata. He writes that “the scars on our body and soul tell the story of wounds inflicted upon us”, and that traumatic experiences are accepted and integrated as identity markers (Ganzevoort 2008:23). Stigmata then transcend the scars of individual traumatic experiences and become “prophetic markers of resistance against the normative cultural stories of wholeness and perfection” (Ganzevoort 2008:28).

The sociologist Didier Fassin also works with bodies and memory in evaluating the experiences of politics and HIV/AIDS in South Africa. He writes that he is concerned with the “inscribing of historical time onto flesh, the social determinations of individuals’ biological fate” and meaning-making of the present through remembering (Fassin 2007:xv). He continues to cite Mbembe (2001) who writes that the West still find it difficult to recognise “the body and flesh of ‘the stranger’ as flesh and body just like mine” as well as the idea of a common humanity shared with others.

Fassin (2007:127) quotes the poem, *Whites* by Sandile Dikeni:

whites shall not be drowned
nor will they be tanned
or banned
only humanised.

History is for him not simply a sum of different narratives, but “it is also what is inscribed within our bodies and makes us think and act as we do” (Fassin 2007:xix). He continues that when it comes to interpretations re. AIDS it is crucial to not only work with a behavioural and culturalists construals, but with the “embodiment of history”. This is similar to the research that has been done with regard to the use of bodymapping in storying people living with HIV/AIDS as discussed in chapter one. Fassin (2007:175) writes that the body is not just a manifestation of a person’s presence in the world, but it is also a site where the past has left its mark or as he puts it “the body is a presence unto oneself and unto the world, embedded in a history that is both individual and collective: the trajectory of a life and the experience of a group”. One of his conclusions is that the history of AIDS extends borders as well as the disease itself. It encompasses depictions of the self and narratives about the other within a network of “social configurations and symbolic arrangements, relations of knowledge and power” (Fassin 2007:275).

Vosloo (2001:39) writes that the Triune God is a “Gifting God” and that the first gift is that of time and the second one is the gift of the body. He continues that there is a discrepancy in time between those who want to build a new future with haste without lingering too long in the past while others want more time to remember the injustices of the past and to search for truth. The Triune God endows the gift of time to find time for reconciliation. The gift of the body is a gift that under apartheid has been tortured and scarred and so many people carry the pain of the past in their bodies. Vosloo (2001:40) finds a link between the way torture was used in Chile and South Africa as “a social strategy that atomized the citizenry through fear and thereby dismantled other social bodies that could rival the state’s authority over individual bodies”. The memories of scarred bodies does not allow any talk about reconciliation as cheap or effortless since “alongside the powerful testimony of those who em-body forgiveness and repentance we have the painful memory of dis-embodiment”. He continues that the body of Christ creates the space where people can express grief for the injustices to bodies “and keep the memories of those bodies alive”.

2.2.2 The body in apartheid theology

Apartheid was always deeply concerned with the body, with the bodies of blacks and the bodies of its white citizenry; in its biology through scientific racism and in its social construction through a variety of laws and regulations with the purpose to control its

boundaries and movement. In this way it firmly established the authority of government over individual bodies. The church, and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in particular, played a crucial role in the authority of state over the bodies of its people through its intimate relationship with the state, and through its theology.

One of the first attempts by the DRC to justify apartheid ideology was in the “Missionary Policy” of 1935 where the diversity of “color, culture and language groups” was acknowledged and where, for example, it was stated that “the traditional fear of the Afrikaner of equality between black and white originated from his aversion to the idea of racial intermarriage. The church frankly declares himself to be against this kind of mixture...it wants to promote and encourage social differentiation and spiritual and cultural segregation, to the benefit of both sections” (Loubser 1996:324). Many South African theologians studying at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the 1930s were inspired by the work of Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) and the popularity of his theology reached a climax in the 1940s with ethnic groups/peoples seen as a sovereign sphere, the notion of “created ordinances” was fixed in exegetical arguments where the “principle of diversity” were deemed to be of crucial importance (Loubser 1996:327). He continues that concepts, such as election, self-maintenance and national calling were carried into the “Kuyperian system of principles” and labelled as “Christian-National”. In 1943, a decision was made at a meeting of the DRC to support biblical proofs for apartheid.

E. P. Groenewald, New Testament professor, compiled a report with detailed biblical support for apartheid, and in 1947, it was the first document to be officially accepted by the DRC (Loubser 1996:328). The report concluded that total apartheid and guardianship (of whites over blacks) was in line with the principles of the Word of God (Loubser 1996:329). He continues that Groenewald highlighted seven principles in the teachings of the Bible on apartheid: the unity of the human generation; the division of humans into races, peoples, and tongues as a conscious deed of God; the will of the Lord is that people living apart should maintain their apartheid (writing that “the history of Israel proves that the people who keeps itself apart from others and thus protects its purity of blood, morals and religion, can be used by God for a lofty calling”); all spheres of life should be encompassed by apartheid; God rewards people who respect apartheid; the unity in Christ does not suspend natural differences; and, lastly, stronger nations have a responsibility towards weaker nations (Loubser 1996:330).

I could not find any direct reference to the body or to the difference between black and white bodies or to the superiority of white bodies over black bodies in the development of a theology of apartheid. There are references to the guardianship of whites over blacks, the special status of Afrikaners as the new people of God (like Israel), and the bearers of the light of the Bible, and of civilisation of Christian Europe to black Africa (Salemink & Van Dijk 1989:12). While the body did not feature prominently in apartheid theology, it was by no means ignored by the DRC as social institution or in the church's involvement in the building of a unique and separate Afrikaner identity. The ideology of apartheid and the theological support of it by the DRC was strongly influenced by the notion of the "curse of Ham". This idea reinforced the notion of the guardianship of white people over blacks, and the superiority of the white body over the black body. Stoop (1984:154) refers to Du Preez (1959) who fed the idea of apartheid back to the Hamitic people ("chamitiese volken"), stating that they are still under the curse of Noah and that they are creatures ("skepsels") rather than ordinary humans. He refers to Nepgen (1928) who wrote that the offspring of Ham have to carry wood and water, and that there can be no mixing with them. He also refers to Mulder (1956) who maintained that the "naturellebeleid" (policy on indigenous people) of the colonist in the eighteenth century was already influenced by this notion, as well as the idea of isolation from the inhabitants of Canaan.

Salemink & Van Dijk (1989:10) write that the modern ideology of apartheid had its roots in ancient European tradition, and that the three sons of Noah, namely Sem, Ham and Japhet were the ancestors of Asia, Africa and Europe respectively. Salemink & Van Dijk (1989:11) refer to Beckers, who, in 1703 noted that the "vervloekte ras van Cham" (the cursed race of Ham) was condemned by God to service and "mishandeling" (maltreatment). Much earlier, Jewish exegesis spoke of the children of Canaan who "shall be born ugly and black...their forefather Canaan commended them to love theft and fornication" (Stoop 1984:156). Even Abraham Kuyper, who had a tremendous influence on apartheid theologians, wrote in 1898 that it was solely the sons of Sem and Japhet who contributed to the development of civilisation in Asia and Europe, and that the sons of Ham never aimed for a higher purpose in life ("stoot tot een hogere levensbezieling gegeven"). He also viewed Africans as a lower form of life and used the metaphor of a pool and swamp when referring to Africans, while likening the "beschavingscreativiteit" (creativity in civilisation) of whites to a river and the source of life-giving water (Salemink & Van Dijk 1989:11).

It was with this ancient ideology in mind that the Afrikaners embarked on the Great Trek (1834 -1838) into the interior of South Africa after the emancipation of slaves by the British in 1833. One of the Trek leaders, Louis Trichardt, named the “equalization of coloreds with whites” as a reason for the Great Trek (Loubser 1996:322). In 1944, the Federation of Afrikaans’ Cultural Organisation convened a “People’s Congress” with representation from a variety of church congregations and cultural organisations. In a speech, the Afrikaner poet, Totius cited Kuyper on the Great Trek as “a force inspired by God, which dominates the whole future of Africa and to some extent the history of the world” (Loubser 1996:327). Totius said that “nations thus had to preserve themselves over against a Babylonian spirit of unification” with the “barbarity” of Africa ascribed to the curse of Ham. The myth of an ancient curse on the son of Ham was inscribed on the bodies of black Africans.

Another instance where black and white bodies were at play in the history of Afrikaner Nationalism, and the Dutch Reformed Church took on the role of social institution, was the “poor white problem” of the 1920s, a phenomenon which still hits the news headlines in South Africa. Loubser (1996:323) writes that the ideology of apartheid was for the first time formulated during the period from 1924 to 1938. He describes it as a time of social upheaval with urbanisation causing social and psychological disruption, and blacks flooding the cities where they competed with Afrikaners in the labour market. De Vries (2013) writes that the phenomenon of “armblankes” (poor whites) dated back to the Anglo-Boer War (1899 -1902), which forced thousands of semi-literate Afrikaners from rural areas to the cities. He writes that in 1890, there were fewer than 10 000 Afrikaners in urban areas, but that by 1926 this number had increased to 391 000. By 1932, a quarter of these urban Afrikaners were labelled poor whites. The Dutch Reformed Church reached out to them as part of a campaign called “helpmekaar” (help one another), but also because of the fear that whites would reach the level of poor blacks.

Willoughby-Herard (2007:480) argues that the Carnegie Corporation Poor White Study between 1927 and 1932 served as “a lynchpin to the political consolidation of Afrikaner Nationalism” in the era of grand apartheid from 1948 till 1994. He argues that the “regulation, constraint, and racial markings of poor whites as irretrievable and degenerate, as ‘like blacks’” played an important role in the creation of apartheid, in the same way that other practices dehumanised blacks, coloureds and Asians. He continues that the fear of “white degeneration”, the policing of white identity and the significance of the “white primitive”

contributed to the establishment of white nationalism and white supremacy (Willoughby-Herard 2007:482). The Carnegie Corporation served the ideals of the American eugenics movement which aimed to civilise poor whites through genetic monitoring, mental testing, sterilisation, forced removals, and detention (Willoughby-Herard 2007:485). He continues that poor whites put the white civilisation at risk of “internal disintegration and degeneration”; he notices that racialisation is the establishment of guilt, shame and self-denigration in the white mind, and that this happens through “practices of highly scripted body modification and surveillance of the body”.

Scientific racism had to protect the white body from the potential of “genetic and racial barbarism, primitivism and degeneration” (Willoughby-Herard 2007:487). The research team of the “Poor White Study” blamed urban industrialisation as a damaging process of political, social and economic transition on poor whites which forced unemployed white males to search for low-paying “kaffir-work” (dangerous and heavy manual labour associated with Africans) (Willoughby-Herard 2007:491). E.G. Malherbe, who was the most prominent member of the research team, viewed the dependency of poor whites as “an insult to the noble memory of the Trekboers”. Willoughby-Herard (2007:493) writes that there was an obsession with the mental testing of poor whites, pictures were taken and their everyday habits were recorded to illustrate how whites were “racialized in an embodied fashion”. He continues that the five-volume Poor White Study had appendixes with photographs of poor whites alluding to the physiological basis of poor white identity.

He writes that “being a poor white scarred the white body”, and attributes the notion of white bodies being perfect and beautiful and non-white bodies being sub-human to racist biology. He writes that they did not only become white through the cultural interpretations of segregation laws, but that “white people became white through monitoring and manipulation of their bodies”. The Carnegie Commissioners reduced poor whites to “biological inferiors” (Willoughby-Herard 2007:496). He continues that activists of the state and the Dutch Reformed Church displayed an eagerness to remove poor white children from their homes to prevent their “ultimate degradation”, since the only outcome of remaining with their parents, so they argued, would be to grow up as failures. The “poor white problem” could probably also explain the eagerness with which the Dutch Reformed Church in 1935 expressed their opposition to the idea of racial intermarriage while advocating cultural and spiritual segregation in their “Missionary Policy” (Loubser 1996:324). Furthermore, this is possibly

why the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, act no. 55 of 1949 was the first major piece of apartheid legislation to be passed after the National Party took power in South Africa in 1948, prohibiting the marriage between people of different races, and therefore prohibiting the degeneration of white bodies by black bodies.

2.3 The body in post-apartheid South Africa

The fiasco created by vandalising the painting of President Jacob Zuma, “The Spear of the Nation” is but one of the glances on the complex notion of the body in contemporary South Africa. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been a constant and vocal champion of oppressed and marginalised bodies in South Africa and in the rest of Africa. The struggle against apartheid was officially over with the election in 1994 of Nelson Mandela as the first democratic president of South Africa. This new South Africa brandishes a constitution which in the Bill of Rights, chapter 2, paragraph 9.3 (info.gov.za, n.d) prohibits the discrimination against anyone based on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth. In the foreword to the book, *Aliens in the household of God*, Tutu (1997:x) writes that it will be unlikely that Christ will be on the side of those that ostracise people based on their race, gender or sexual orientation, making them aliens, banning them from the household of God. He continues that “if the church, after the victory over apartheid, is looking for a worthy moral crusade, then this is it: the fight against homophobia and heterosexism”. Sadly, he had to address this issue again more than a decade later, not because people were treated as “aliens in the household of God” based on their sexual orientation, but as a rebuke against the wave of xenophobia that flooded parts of the country in May 2008. Other Africans welcomed South Africans as refugees and provided shelter for the liberation movements and Tutu was pleading once again to stop the violence, saying that “we can’t repay them by killing their children. We can’t disgrace our struggle with these acts of violence. It is as if we are back in the days of the necklace” (Timeslive, 2008).

In The Washington Post, Tutu (2010) once again made the call to stand up against another wrong, writing that “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people....are part of the African family. But a wave of hate is spreading across my beloved continent....These are terrible backward steps for human rights in Africa”. In this article he is referring to the denial of fundamental human rights of gay and lesbian people in Senegal, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda,

Rwanda and Burundi, and demands that politicians stop exploiting this hatred, asking clerics to stand up for the “principles of universal dignity and fellowship”. This should also be viewed in the light of the rise in “corrective rape” in South Africa, where a gang of men will rape a lesbian believing that this will “cure” the woman and will teach her how to be a real, straight woman (Harrison, 2009).

The 2013 report by Amnesty International, “Making love a crime: criminalization of same-sex conduct in sub-Saharan Africa” confirms all these trends. The report concludes that “religious leaders too, sometimes influenced by US-based churches, have contributed to the climate of fear and loathing towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in many countries...they have incited hatred and encouraged violence towards LGBTI persons” (Amnesty International 2013:73). Political leaders have paved the way for this malignant rhetoric by creating a climate of fear and promoting violence against LGBT persons through maintaining and introducing draconian legislation that violates the human rights of LGBT people because of their gender, identity, and sexual orientation. This discrimination has often been achieved with the help of the media by propagating stereotypes, linking homosexuality with corruption and paedophilia, and by publishing personal details (Amnesty International 2013:72). The report expands on the legacies of colonial laws that still live on in African countries like Uganda and Cameroon, with specific reference to Dr Basile Ndjio from the University of Douala, Cameroon who says that “from a historical perspective, prior to colonialism, which fundamentally changed the sexual imagination and practices in Africa, most African traditional societies were characterized by their sexual tolerance and openness...the colonial administration only extended through anti-sodomy laws the moralistic view of the Church” (Amnesty International 2013:15).

In December 2012, Desmond Tutu once again urged Ugandan members of parliament to reject the Anti-homosexuality Bill, writing that it “is reminiscent of what we experienced under apartheid and what the Jews experienced at the hands of Nazis” (Tutu 2012). He continues to refer to the spirit of Ubuntu, “the idea that I cannot be free if you are not also free. A person with ‘ubuntu’ is open and available to others, affirming of others, and does not feel threatened by others’ differences”. The Amnesty International report refers to the gap between the law and the lived reality in South Africa, stating that “levels of violence and threats of violence against LGBTI people are persistently high, particularly against those living in townships and rural areas” (Amnesty International 2013:39). The report continues

that between June and November 2012 seven people were murdered, five of which were lesbians, killed as a result of their gender identity and sexual orientation. The report refers to Professor Juan Nel who writes that “we have a victimized society and a very patriarchal society. The issue of gender non-conformity and its relation to violence is very significant...the most victimized are black lesbians and black gay men” (Amnesty International 2013:40).

The 2012 Reconciliation Barometer report focuses on youth attitudes in South Africa and while some political leaders portray youth as a ticking time bomb, “the unemployed and disenfranchised, provocateurs of violent service delivery protests, and guileless pawns of political plays between business, government, politicians and organized labour”, youth view themselves as “confident, active and creative” (Lefko-Everett 2012:7). The report continues that while there is consensus about the “historical truths” of South Africa’s apartheid past, the youth are the most likely to be able to build relationships across racial divides. The barometer highlights interesting aspects of society. While 82 per cent of black South Africans agree that they are still poor today because of the lasting effects of apartheid, only 50.6 per cent of whites support this view (Lefko-Everett 2012:37). The barometer indicates that a modest 55.5 per cent of South Africans agree that progress has been made in reconciliation since 1994, while 66.7 per cent are willing to “forget about apartheid”, with 66.9 per cent thinking that it is time to forget those that hurt others in the past (Lefko-Everett 2012:39). As in previous years, most South Africans have indicated that they identify most strongly with “others who speak the same language, share their ethnic background, or who they believe to be of the same race group”. This provides them with a sense of self-worth, feelings of importance and a sense of security (Lefko-Everett 2012:42).

The report also found that “levels of socialization, and the development of stronger relationships across race lines, are consistently lower in successive survey rounds” (Lefko-Everett 2012:43). The report continues that only 27.4 per cent of South Africans interact with someone of another race on ordinary weekdays, and 43.5 per cent seldom or never speak to a person of another race. With regards to socialising, 17.8 per cent of South Africans interact with someone of another race at home or in the home of friends. Importantly, the survey has found that there is “an almost entirely linear relationship between contact, socialisation and living standards”, which indicates that interaction and socialising of people across racial lines happens least of all in less affluent households in homogeneous townships and rural areas,

while it occurs most in affluent households in urban areas. This indicates that socioeconomic status is a key determinant in the levels of integration. In a response to what South Africans consider to be the biggest source of division in the country at present, the most frequent answer “has consistently been that the gap between rich and poor is what keeps us apart from one another in this country” (Lefko-Everett 2012:45). Surprisingly, only 13.2 per cent of South Africans consider race as the foremost source of social division, but as the report points out, there is too much of an overlap between class (affluence) and race to conclude that class is replacing race as a social schism. The report finds that inequality is at the root of South Africa’s most urgent social challenges (Lefko-Everett 2012:45).

2.4 An appeal to experience

The challenge for theology is to take “lived bodily experiences” seriously and not merely employ it as some kind of window-dressing to be able to pass as a contextual theology. The quest is for a theological anthropology that will take the body and the experiences of the body seriously, which will be able to treat the body and the experiences of the body as a source of revelation and knowledge. Such a theological anthropology should be able to incorporate the bodily experiences of different, concrete life-worlds as an equal source of revelation, and in this case, the experiences of the bodies of women and men in southern Africa.

Writing about slavery and the status of women in early Christian communities, the church historian Jennifer Glancy (2010:4) works with the theory that “social location is known in the body” and that what we know in the body goes beyond our own social location. This implies that “bodily knowledge of social location is profoundly relational” and is learned from childhood (Glancy 2010:11). Aspects of social location include categories of race and ethnicity as this is interpreted in rank, status, citizenship, wealth and antiquity. This fundamental knowledge “in turn engage[s] intuitions about a kind of knowing that comes into being as flesh gives birth to flesh” (Glancy 2010:5). She refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, which expresses the idea that we make sense and sense of other bodies through “a system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*” which is “embodied history, internalized as second nature and forgotten as history”, and in turn is interpreted as “knowledge borne in the body” (Glancy 2010:51).

The documentation of African bodies by European travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators, and academics span a period of about 500 years. During this time, African bodies have been sketched, measured, dissected, photographed, displayed as a curiosity, kidnapped and transported as slaves, forcibly removed from villages and neighbourhoods, prudently clothed, preached to and converted, maimed, tortured, sexually abused and economically exploited as forced or cheap labour. Of course this is a very broad characterisation of centuries of history and certainly there are many exceptions to this dominant narrative captured in the myriad stories of individuals. Of course, women, both white and black have been exploited and dominated during this period by white and black males and are still being controlled and marginalised by a dominant heterosexist cultural narrative. Of course the plight of LBGTI (Lesbian Bisexual Gay Transgender Intersex) individuals came to the fore during the second half of the twentieth century and still these individuals are being marginalised, abused, raped and murdered. It illustrates how profoundly the African body has been objectified over centuries. In stark contrast to this, very little has been documented about the white bodies that tread on African soil, except for the bodies of poor whites which threaten the social order by being too close to “uncivilised” black bodies. They too have been measured, weighed, forcibly removed and morally judged as corrupt.

If social location is known in the body, and if recent research in molecular biology suggesting that trauma can be inherited up to a hundred generations is incorporated together with the notion of implicit memory, then it is reasonable to conceive that there is a transmission of these corporeal narratives from generation to generation. This is a kind of “embodied history” (a history of bodily knowledge of social location) which comes into being “as flesh gives birth to flesh”.

Jonathan Jansen follows a parallel enquiry in his book, *Knowledge in the blood: confronting race and apartheid past* (2009) in exploring the question how historical knowledge is transmitted across generations, especially within white Afrikaner students. He builds upon the conceptual framework of the work of Eva Hoffman who studied the transmittance of knowledge within second generation Holocaust survivors, writing that “Hoffman’s construct of indirect knowledge is linked to other empirical accounts and conceptual frameworks on the transmission of especially traumatic knowledge and memory from one generation to the next” (Jansen 2009:52). He continues to investigate “with what content knowledge travels between living generations” (Jansen 2009:64) within the contexts of family, church, sport (especially

rugby), schools, cultural networks and peers and concludes that “many Afrikaner youths and their parents continue to hold this knowledge of a barbaric black people” and that the armed force did nothing more during apartheid than to uphold law and order in the townships (Jansen 2009:82). He defines ‘knowledge in the blood’ as “knowledge embedded in the emotional, psychic, spiritual, social, economic, political, and psychological lives of a community” (Jansen 2009:171). It is now also possible to add “biological” to this list of spheres in defining ‘knowledge in the blood’.

When all this is considered, the passionate reaction to the depiction of Jacob Zuma in the painting “The Spear of the Nation” cannot merely be passed off as political manoeuvring. Knowing this, the past, inclusive of the trauma inflicted by apartheid, the ravages of wars (such as the Anglo-Boer War), and the exploitation of colonialism cannot easily be forgotten and are not easily erased from memory. The challenge lies in the language of the “narrative metaphor”: the narrative should be re-authored to find an alternative to the dominant narrative of the past, both on a national and individual level; different authors are needed for the Victim, Torturer, Exploiter, Racist, Boer, Struggler and more, so that they can re-author an alternative to the 500-year-old dominant narrative. Both the dominant and alternative experiences of black and white bodies should serve as the source of knowledge and revelation for a theological anthropology that takes the body seriously.

Chapter 3

The body in Christianity: the Church Fathers till the Reformation

In her novel, *Gut Symmetries*, Jeanette Winterson (2013:217) writes:

The Jews believe that soul comes to inhabit the body at the moment of birth. Until then, until the image itself becomes flesh, it pursues its crystal pattern, untied. Wave function of life scattered down to one dear face. How else can I know you but through the body you rent. Forgive me if I love it too much?

The character in her novel grieves her father's death and contemplates quantum theory which holds "that for every object there is a wave function that measures the probability of finding that object at a certain point in space and time" (Winterson 2013:161). She continues:

More obviously, my father seemed to be here, as you and I are here, but we too can be measured as wave functions, unlimited by the boundaries of our bodies. What physicists identify as our wave function may be what has traditionally been called the soul...we are and we are not our bodies.

Winterson (2013:10) also writes about matter that was perceived to be fixed and unchanging, but also as ever becoming:

...those physical determinants of parents, background, school, family, marriage, death, love, work, are themselves as much in motion as I am. What should be stable, shifts. What I am told is solid, slips. The sensible strong ordinary world of fixity is a folklore. The earth is not flat. Geometry cedes to algebra. The Greeks were wrong.

"The Greeks" she refers to, is among others Milesians of Ionia, who, in the sixth century BC, explored the nature of things, the "physis", and so laid the foundation for science. In the fifth century BC, Heraclitus proposed his doctrine of eternal Becoming, "flux not fix, an identity of perpetual change, process not substance, the flow that made it impossible to step in the same river twice". For Parmenides, rival of Heraclitus, nothing changed since the godhead was supreme and matter was certain..."Becoming was challenged by Being". Since it was not possible to reconcile these two notions, the Greeks divided spirit and matter and Aristotle continued to systemise the cosmos through atoms..."Matter and Mind, Matter and Form". Winterson (2013:11) writes that these divisions were incorporated by Christianity as it developed. Christianity and science were therefore intimately connected until the

Renaissance, “made possible by the dualistic system of the mundane and the miraculous that suited the world-view of both interested parties”. Matter also included the body, and the question is whether the body was treated as mundane or miraculous, as a mere vessel for the spirit/soul or as something essential to navigate the world, as something fixed or in flux. How was the body experienced and regarded during the history of Christianity? The predominant view is to simply cast centuries of perceptions of the body and bodily experiences in Christian history in the mould of an antagonistic dualism — body versus soul, matter versus spirit, matter/body versus mind. In this chapter, I would like to investigate this view as it played out in the life and thoughts of Christians in the early Christian communities, in the writings of Church fathers, in mysticism, and in the dominant voices of the Reformation. I want to explore also, its relevance to the search for a theological anthropology centred on the body/embodiment.

3.1 Corporeal dynamics in early Christian communities

In contrast with the early readers of Paul’s letters or the mystics in the Middle Ages, we have a more relaxed approach to sexuality and the body today. However, we are warned by the words of Peter Brown (1988:xvii) not to “sink into the cozy, even arch, familiarity with which a modern person often feels entitled to approach the sexual concerns of men and women in a distant age”. On the one hand, we can agree with this warning and with his astute observation that in researching perceptions towards the body in early Christianity, “we shall be dealing with a Christianity whose back is firmly turned towards us”. He continues that there is an abyss between the “Christianity of the Roman world” and that of the Middle Ages, as it is possible to imagine one between Christians of the twenty-first century and the Reformation. On the other hand, we need to make sense of the world we live in through the bodies we are; and this is the link we have with Christians of the Reformation, the Middle Ages and the Roman Empire— our bodies. Brown (1988:xviii) continues that “real men and women faced desperate choices, endured privation and physical pain, courted breakdown and bitter disillusionment”; in this lies the challenge — to engage with these real men and real women across the span of many centuries and many social changes, and to try and listen to what it was like living in their bodies at that time.

The book, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (2010) by the church historian, Jennifer Glancy is a fascinating attempt to incorporate insights gained from the corporeal turn

in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially from sociology into an interpretation of Christian history with a focus on the bodies of early Christians. In her work she gives attention to “traces of corporeal dynamics” within early Christian writings (Glancy 2010:137). She starts by arguing that “social location is known in the body” and that what we know in the body goes beyond our own social location (Glancy 2010:4). A person’s location will be influenced by a variety of manners and postures. Here she refers to the work of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1990), whose notion of posture is similar to that of Maurice Merleau Ponty; it is an attempt to define practical existence from within the social field, explaining that “the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which *recalls* the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, rise to states of mind” (Csordas 2011: 141). This implies that “bodily knowledge of social location is profoundly relational” and is learnt from childhood (Glancy 2010:11). Aspects of social location include categories of race and ethnicity as this is interpreted in rank, status, citizenship, wealth, and antiquity. She continues that “corporeal inflection of identity informed the kinds of social arrangements Christians constructed and ultimately informed moral imagining in Christian circles” (Glancy 2010:11). She argues that what was experienced morally in everyday life was reflected in the body as “mind”, and that Christian communities were not likely to challenge social distinctions with a moral connotation, but would rather have reproduced it (Glancy 2010:12). She writes that even though we would be alienated from parts of corporal narratives of Christian antiquity, “we know the world as mediated through our own corporal knowledge” (Glancy 2010:7).

Christian authors had a certain understanding of identity and the self. This fundamental knowledge went further than pure knowledge, but engaged an intuitive knowing that was passed on from generation to generation — something one is born with (Glancy 2010:5). In her book she also refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, which expresses the idea that we make sense; and we make sense of other bodies through “a system of structured, structuring dispositions, the habitus”, which is “embodied history, internalized as second nature and forgotten as history”, and in turn is interpreted as “knowledge borne in the body” (Glancy 2010:51). Csordas (2011:140) writes that in Bourdieu’s work there is reciprocity between the body and the world and that “the locus of agency in the relation between our bodies and our world shiftsto the habitus, and the mode of agency becomes practice”. In the context of slavery, for example, this means that the development of Christian ethics was

informed by culture, that Christian attitudes towards bodies were “inevitably inscribed by gender, sexuality and status” (Glancy 2010:51).

There is a transmission of these corporeal narratives and the habitus (where agency becomes practice) from generation to generation, a kind of “embodied history” (a history of bodily knowledge of social location) which comes into being “as flesh gives birth to flesh” (Glancy 2010:5). It is then also possible to follow and understand the “traces of corporeal dynamics” in early Christian writings, despite the difference in cultures and the centuries that have passed. This stance implies that the back of early Christianity is not that firmly turned towards us, *alias* Peter Brown. It is possible to have an embodied understanding of the bodies of the early Christian women and men.

What then are these “corporeal dynamics” captured in the resin of Antiquity? In the Roman Empire “women... were failed males” (Brown 1988:10) and a man in the second century was superior to women, slaves and barbarians, and held a dominant position in society. Brown (1988:26) continues that in Roman society there was a juxtaposition of extreme rigidity and tolerance based on an image of a person founded on “benevolent dualism”. The soul was the inferior other to the self as located in the body. After much pain and disease, it was best for the soul to go to the stars and to be clean of the body. The soul was, however, sent from heaven to be the administrator of the body for a while, and it was better for a wise man to relate to his body in benevolent concern. Brown (1988:26) refers here to the work of Arataeus and Plutarch who wrote that the needs of the body could not be overruled by “overmeticulous and rigid control”. The aim of philosophy and medicine was to affect a symbiosis of body and soul, where the soul had to “exercise gentle violence on the body”.

The body had its own intrinsic laws and was not allowed to overrule the tranquil mind with its needs. The mind had to be refined to avoid partaking in the “liability of the flesh”. It was undignified for a man to be too occupied with the body; too much exercise, drinking, eating, “evacuating the bowels and much copulating” were in bad taste (Brown 1988:27). He continues that “the body had its rightful place in a great chain of being that linked man both to the gods and to the beasts”. The city was the antithesis of the natural world, with the family and the city determining what was, and what was not acceptable in the body’s connection with the natural world.

The tolerance afforded to the body was founded on the logic that once the city made its claim, it was relentless. This implied that young men were allowed some sexual freedom (including love affairs and homosexual experimentation), before they had to take up a position in civic society. Young women were often afforded the same freedom without the stigma associated with the body in later Mediterranean Christian communities (Brown 1988:29). There was, however, a profound difference in opinion in the second century between Roman pagans and Christians towards the possibilities of the body. Clement of Alexandria was considered to be a moderate in Christian circles and he wrote that ideally, desire should not be felt (Brown 1988:31). This was in sharp contrast to the Roman and Aegean view that the body, like society, was meant to be left unchanged and administered. The body was considered to be eternal, unchanged and formless matter held together during this short lifetime by the soul. Clement was aware of the Greek philosophers who taught resistance to bodily passion, and that it was possible to pursue rational goals through instincts, but his view was more radical. In “Stromateis”, Clement wrote that Moses stood on Sinai for 40 days, transformed by the presence of God, and the needs of his body stilled in him for that time. Through the Incarnation even the body could be transformed. Brown (1988:31) writes that this view held that “sexual renunciation might lead the Christian to transform the body and, in transforming the body, to break with the discreet discipline of the ancient city”. In Christian society this was a radical alternative to the seemingly secure moral and social order of the cities. This alternative (sexual renunciation) made it possible for Christians to share in the victory of Christ by forsaking all sexual activity (Brown 1988:32).

Paul probably was a Roman citizen (Brown 1988:44), who spent years in the Aegean cities of western Asian Minor, and was executed in Rome around 60 (A.D.). His main mission was to convert pagans to Christianity and in a letter to the Galatians he wrote that they were now the Israel of God, a new creation, and that circumcision or an intact foreskin was irrelevant. Paul lived in the light of the revelation and in expectation of the resurrection; in a letter to the Philippians he wrote that Jesus will transform the “lowly body” to be like his “glorious body”. Brown (1988:47) eloquently continues that “in Paul’s letters, we are presented with the human body as in a photograph taken against the sun: a jet black shape whose edges are suffused with light. Perishable, weak...always carrying the death of Jesus in its vulnerability...very much an earthen vessel”. For Paul, the body in itself was not the only source of evil. He regarded the conflict between spirit and flesh as an indication of resistance to the will of God. The body under the power of the flesh was “a synecdoche for the state of

humankind pitted against the spirit of God” (Brown 1988:48). Humans were not primarily torn between body and soul, but as persons divided between spirit and flesh. They were moving from living a life in the flesh to living in Christ, in the spirit (Brown 1988:49). As new creatures in the risen Christ, there was a confrontational suspension between the old life as pagans and the new life in Christ. There was no place for sexual sins in the new Christian communities.

Brown (1988:51) writes that “the body was not a neutral thing, placed between nature and the city. For Paul, the body belonged to Christ as a “temple of the Holy Spirit”. Christians were living under the notion of sanctification, and codes for sexual behaviour were adopted from the practice of the Jewish married household. Paul prohibited pagan converts to carry any mark on their body as a sign of a separate identity and imposed strict moral codes. By the end of the first century, when it became clear that the coming of Christ was not imminent, Christian communities realised that if they wanted to survive as a distinct group, they had to create a code that corresponded to Jewish Law. Brown (1988:60) writes that the “Apology” of Justin indicates how strict codes of sexual discipline in the beginning of the second century provided the Church with such a distinctive code of behaviour. He continues that “by concentrating in a single-minded manner on sexual restraint and sexual heroism, the Christians of the age of Justin had found their way to presenting themselves as the bearers of a truly universal religion”. Everyone could adhere to these strict codes of sexual conduct regardless of their social class, education or gender, and continence specifically was associated with elemental simplicity. Brown (1988:61) writes that “total chastity was a gesture that cut through the silken web of decorum that swathed the public man”.

3.2 The body and the Church Fathers

In his discussion of the body in Greek Christianity, Ware (1997:90) refers to John Climacus, who was Abbot of Sinai in the seventh century. He describes the love-hate relationship Climacus had with his body, asking, “How can I escape from him when he is going to rise with me?... I embrace him. And I turn away from him. What is this mystery in me?” Ware (1997:91) explains this ambivalence in the light of the double inheritance of Greek Christianity. On the one hand is the influence of the Hebraic-biblical tradition, which has a strong holistic understanding of personhood; and on the other hand is the Hellenic-Platonist influence with its definite distinction between body and soul. The Old Testament views the

human person as a single, undivided entity and not as a mixture of soul and body. The human person is physical and embodied, as “flesh-animated-by-soul”. When there is a reference in the Old Testament to life after death (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2), it is portrayed in terms of the resurrection of the body rather than the immortality of the soul. The Greek notion of the pre-existence of the soul and the transmigration of the soul from body to body is a foreign concept in the Hebraic tradition.

Ware (1997:92) regards Plato’s view of the human person to be in contrast with the Hebraic tradition. He refers to the writing of Plato in “Alcibiades”, describing the soul as man and within the soul is the intelligent part, which is immortal. The soul needs the body and its sexual urges — the body is not evil, but needs to be controlled. The body is not an intrinsic component of human personhood. The true person is a mind, imprisoned in the body for a while with the intellect seen as eternal. According to Plato, the ideal is an existence away from all physicality. Louth (1997:111) regards the Christianity of the Mediterranean where the spoken language and thoughts are predominantly Greek as the basis for Western Catholic Christianity. This implies that one needs to look back to the work of Plato, which predates the early Christian writers, and in particular “Timaeus”, a work that greatly influenced later understandings of personhood.

The human body is viewed against the background of the cosmos, and as an analogy, it provides a way to understand the cosmos as well. According to this view, the human body is a little body and the cosmos a great body. For both these bodies, life and form is forged on the indwelling of soul and reason (Louth 1997:112). The body’s nature is threefold, including reason, psychological energy, and desire; through these the body expresses the soul. The health of the body is maintained when these are in balance. These energies or forces can be connected to blood, phlegm, and so forth. Sexual activity, for example, was regarded as a reflection of the energy of the cosmos and not merely as an act between persons. These perceptions of human personhood within Greek philosophy influenced the way Christians understood human persons and their bodies.

Plotinus, who is regarded as the father of Neoplatonism, remained very sceptical towards the body. According to his disciple, Porphyry, he was ashamed to be in a body (Ware 1997:92). This was the milieu in which the early Church functioned. Even Philo, who was a Hellenised Jew, described the body in “The Migration of Abraham” as a “foul prison house” and evil by

nature. Ware (1997:93) insists that “the physicality” of Jesus’ resurrection body is crucial in the gospels of the New Testament. He describes the physicality of Jesus Christ’s suffering, which forgoes his crucifixion and death; after his resurrection, Jesus Christ encourages people to take note and touch him. Ware (1997:92) writes that “the spiritual value of the human body is firmly underlined by the central event on which the Christian faith is founded: God’s flesh-taking or incarnation”.

Ware (1997:94) regards Paul’s view of the body as “highly affirmative” — not to be confused with the flesh as a description of complete humanity, which was rather gloomy. He identifies three interconnecting levels of the body in Paul’s writing: the physical body of the believer, the sacramental body received in communion, and the ecclesial body partaking in the Eucharist. As members of the church they belong to an embodied living organism. Ware (1997:95) writes that although the New Testament reiterates the Hebraic view of the intrinsic goodness of the body, there is an advocacy for celibacy, not evident in the broader aspects of Hellenism and Judaism. There was an increase in moral strictness in the Roman Empire from the first and second centuries onwards, and although this was already in place before Christianity became dominant in society, Christianity strengthened this tendency with its emphasis on virginity and a strong denunciation of any sexual relationship outside marriage (Ware 1997:96).

The Gnostics endorsed Philo’s view that the body was evil by nature, and that only the soul could be saved. They were convinced that the soul was in desperate need of divine knowledge (gnosis) that would wake them from sleep regarding the origin of self, so that they could be salvaged from an alien, material world (Williams 1998:129). The body was described as “a prison” and “a cave” created by monsters that created the cosmos. The sexual act was regarded as a “subhuman, beastly use of the body” and Marcion of Sinope (a Christian from the second century) described the body as “full of excrement” (Williams 1998:143). Gnostic perceptions of the body, however, were more ambivalent and Williams (1998:140) argues that even Gnostics recognised an extraordinary sign of divine power in the upright posture of the human body, which sets it apart from the animal world. This upright posture was an indication of spiritual illumination and the awareness of the person’s spiritual roots.

Ware (1997:97) writes that Irenaeus of Lyons (200) used “flesh” as a description of human physicality and in response to the Gnostics, he wrote in “*Patrologia Orientalis*” that “the flesh is to be interpenetrated by the power of the spirit”, and that “just as the flesh is liable to corruption, so it is also capable of attaining incorruptibility”. Impressed by the martyrdom of Polycarp (the Bishop of Smyrna from whose burning body a sweet perfume rose), Irenaeus regarded the new body living in a fully material world “heavy with goodness” (Brown 1988:73).

3.2.1 Tertullian: look at the body

For those in Carthaginian society who were not likely to suffer a martyr’s death, Tertullian had a simple answer: the gift of the Spirit is brought down by refraining from all sexual activity and writes that “by continence you will buy up a great stock of sanctity, by making savings on the flesh, you will be able to invest in the Spirit” (Brown 1988:77). Tertullian was a stoic and an avid reader of medical literature. He used this knowledge to advocate long fasts, isolating the body with medical precision. He writes that fasting is necessary to prevent “the whole dwelling place of the inner person “from becoming blocked with food, so that nothing else remains of lustful thoughts. He proposed that the body should be subjected to strict self-denial, believing that refraining from sex can purify the soul for vision. He writes that we should “look at our own inner world. Think of how a man feels in himself when he abstains from a woman. He thinks spiritual thoughts” (Brown 1988:78). His idea that the “discipline” of God should be conveyed to other Christians through visions and ecstatic prophecies was an outflow of the “New Prophecy” of Montanus, the first grass-roots movement in Christianity, which started in Phrygia around 150/160 (Brown 1988:76).

Tertullian was no dualist at all and had a very simple approach — “look to the body”. He believed that the soul was moulded in the outer body as a concrete, invisible and subtle “body”, and when experiencing a vision, the outer world forcefully impacted on it. Brown (1988:77) writes that “his insistence on the control of the body was so rigorous, precisely because he believed that it was directly through the body and its sensations that the soul was tuned to the high pitch required for it to vibrate to the Spirit of God”. Tertullian is described as the first Latin writer that portrayed human nature as unchanging, always subordinate to the facts of sex. Sexuality is deeply located in the body. For Christians, as well as pagans, sexual desire in all humans was regarded as a dangerous threat, and in particular women’s power to

seduce. Tertullian based this misogyny on facts of nature, which cannot be changed — neither could baptism change this state of affairs. The grace of God cannot change the permanent weakness of sexual human nature (Brown 1988:82).

3.2.2 Clement of Alexandria: the body as consort and all

Clement had a much more positive view on the body. “Without the body, how could the divine plan for us in the church achieve its end?” he asks, convinced that the word of the Lord will only endure if the “frail flesh” is restored from generation to generation through procreation (Brown 1988:132). This he writes in reaction to the radical viewpoint of the Encratites, who regarded sexuality as an indicator of the fallen state of mankind and propagated a renunciation of marriage. Brown (1988:135) writes that the profile for Clement’s moderate Christians was younger members of the community who were sexually active; it was not the Christian sage who was more serene, and whose passion was spent. There was no stigma linked to sexual activity *per se* that could derail a Christian from attaining perfection in Christ. More important was the “spiritual mature Christian”, who was in charge of a large household, being a “faint image of the Divine Providence” (Brown 1988:135). The church in Clement’s time was more a “loose confederation of believing households”, based on a married Christian morality, where men and women served Christ without any distraction.

In “The Pedagogue”, he wrote that the body is the “consort and ally” of the soul in the process for a human person to “attain its destined end through the body” (Brown 1988:127). The soul did not exist prior to the body’s existence and he links the divine image with the body and with human sexuality. He writes that with God, humans are co-creators, and that sexuality is one way to express creativity. He considers even the seed holy of those who have been sanctified by God (Ware 1997:97). Clement states that the “Paidagōgos” was written as a guideline, “how each of us ought to conduct himself in respect to the body, or rather how to regulate the body itself” (Brown 1988:126). The pagan idea of moral refinement was based on a profound conviction that the body could convey messages as clear as any words, combined with an acute sensitivity to others, and a deeply embedded sense of form. Brown (1988:127) describes Clement as a moral genius, making wide use of pagan Greek sources in a “carefully considered alliance”. In his writings he gave considerable attention to the events of everyday life. The voice was, for him an indication of the perfect tuning of body and soul.

Careful consideration was given to the use of every word, how every phrase was balanced, and the proper tone. All crudities had to be filed away. This fitted in with his notion that the Christian sage was “an artist, working with loving care on mind and body” (Brown 1988:130). Clement’s ideal was that of “apatheia”, a state where “good actions might spring from right knowledge as gently as a shadow fell from a body” (Brown 1988:131). This state was not reached through the suppression of feelings. Rather, Clement’s use of the “passions” indicated complexes where the true expression of feelings was prohibited. Brown (1988:137) writes that Clement’s most courageous act was to write for the “married Christian laity” at a time when radicals promoted the “dangerous mystique of continence”.

Ware (1998:97) writes that his view was not popular with later Greek Fathers. Maximus the Confessor was of the opinion that there would have been no sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve, were it not for the Fall. This does not mean that human sexuality is sinful, but it was not part of God’s original plan. Irenaeus, however, regards Adam and Eve as sexual beings even before the Fall. Brown (1988:139) writes that “the ideal of the untouched human body came to the fore”, especially in the Church in Roman society where the notion of virginity became prominent. Ware (1997:98) regards Greek Christianity as ambivalent towards the body, “an unresolved tension”; there is no outright rejection of the body. The body is regarded as fundamentally good, although its practices are seen as negative.

3.2.3 Origen: the dull creakings of the body

Ammicht-Quinn (2004:71) refers to Origen who claimed that “God created the present world and he chained the soul to the body for punishment”. Origen’s words are an early expression of anthropological dualism, which was not only about the disconnect between body and soul, but about “ascetic attacks on the body by the soul, [and] ecstatic attacks on the soul by the body”. Brown (1988:163) writes that Origen was concerned with the reason for the “diversity among created beings”. Origen indicated that the word “psyche” for soul was derived from the word “cold” or “psychros”, and that the soul was “merely the result of a subtle cooling off of the original ardour of the primal, deepest self: the spirit” (Brown 1988:163). Origen was deeply ambivalent about the body. He portrayed the body as a source of temptation and frustration, writing about “the coals of fire” one has to sit upon (Brown 1988:165). Temptation was caused by giving permission to evil thoughts, originating from the “dull creakings of the body” with its need for food, and its “organic sexual drives”. Brown

(1988:167) writes that these temptations implied collaboration with demons and this was registered in the heart as “inappropriate images, fantasies, and obsessions”. Sexual experiences led to a “dulling of the spirit’s true capacity for joy”, which implied that a “discipline of the senses” was crucial (Brown 1988:173). Not only continence was at stake, but “physical indulgence, undue eating, undue enjoyment of sight and sound”, and “the physical joys of sexual bonding in marriage”.

At the same time he veered away from the opinion of his contemporaries by maintaining that the body was crucial to the slow healing of the soul. He did not regard the body as a prison of the soul. A specific physical structure had been allocated to each human spirit, and the flesh and blood of every person was unique to that person, “exquisitely calibrated by God” (Brown 1988:165). Origen regarded aspects like sexuality and sexual differences, as well as other basic aspects associated with the physical body as provisional. Brown (1988:167) writes that Origen conveyed “a profound sense of the fluidity of the body”, and that the human body at present only reflected a compressed moment of the journey of the spirit to its “former, limitless identity”. Origen maintained that the body would also be mysteriously transformed, along with the spirit, to become “less ‘thick’, less ‘coagulated’, [and] less ‘hardened’, as the numbing inertia of the spirit thawed in the growing heat of its yearning for the Wisdom of God” (Brown 1988:168). Living life in a human body with certain sexual characteristics was but a passing phase. Brown (1988:168) continues that for Origen “the body was poised on the edge of a transformation so enormous as to make all present notions of identity tied to sexual differences, and all social roles based upon marriage, procreation, and childbirth, seem as fragile as dust dancing in a sunbeam”.

Louth (1997:113) describes the ways in which a cosmic understanding of personhood was expressed by Christians. One way was the position the body had to adopt in prayer. For Plato, an upright position had cosmic significance since the rational soul was located in the top of the body. Early Christians also specified the direction of prayer — East is where the sun rises, and the direction from where the Messiah would be coming. The importance of this posture is described in treatises on prayer by Origen, Tertullian and Cyprian, with prayer being a practical way of expressing the cosmic significance of the body. This significance was also expressed in the Christian understanding of cosmology, specifically in the doctrine of the double creation as worked out by Origen (influenced by the Jewish philosopher Philo) and later supported by Greek and Byzantine Christianity (Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the

Confessor). Origen replaced Clement in Alexandria when he left to serve the bishop of Jerusalem around 202 (Brown 1988:136). In the doctrine of the double creation, there is a distinction between the first creation, when spiritual beings appeared — made in the image of God, and the second creation or embodied creation of humans as sexually differentiated beings. The first stage of creation was considered to be fundamentally better than the second, as the latter was signified by the duality between soul and body, male and female; it reflected a sinful division (Louth 1997:115).

On a practical level, the doctrine of double creation provided powerful support to the ideal of virginity or celibacy, extolled as an ideal way for Christians to live, and was extremely popular in early and patristic Christianity. Origen portrayed virginity as the unique link between heaven and earth; human nature that gradually progressed towards the divine was most transparent in “bodies untouched by sexual experience” (Brown 1988:176). These celibates were the representatives of God’s most profound purpose to transform the human race. From the start Origen worked with the notion of transformation —“I beseech you, therefore, be transformed. Resolve to know that in you there is a capacity to be transformed” (Brown 1988:162). The incarnation marked the beginning of this transformation, when Christ descended into a human body so that “human and divine began to be woven together, so that by prolonged fellowship with divinity, human nature might become divine” (Brown 1988:175). Through celibacy, a Christian could return to the original, primal state. Louth (1997:116) writes that “if the state of those risen from the dead is beyond the distinction of sex, then it is like man’s first creation: the end is like the beginning”. The celibate returns to his natural state and becomes what he/she inherently is. The Fall is characterised by corruption and death, and through marriage and childbearing, one keeps this state of corruption in place. Marriage is part of man’s fallen state. Brown (1988:168) interestingly points to the widespread view that Origen had himself castrated around the age of 20, and that he was “a walking lesson in the basic indeterminacy of the body”, where the body is not defined by its sexual characteristics or the social roles derived from these traits.

3.2.4 The Dessert Fathers and the body

In the influential Greek monastic texts, “The Life of Anthony”, the body of Anthony is described in a positive way; it notes that isolation and physical trials in a fort for over 20 years didn’t ruin his body, but restored it to a healthy condition. Asceticism understood in

this way is a struggle for the body and not against it. There is, however, a fear of the naked body in these texts. The words of Symeon are an exception. He was known as the New Theologian (949 – 1022), who wrote in his “hymns” that even his penis was in Christ, explicitly endorsing all the functions of the body (Ware 1997:100). A period of about 300 years lies between the first renunciation of Anthony (270) and the death of Dorotheos of Gaza (also known as the Hermit of Kemet) in 560, who compiled directions for spiritual training and found his own monastery in Gaza. Brown (1988:235) writes that the one constant feature during this time was the “shared momentum of body and soul” and that it would be a mistake to interpret the extreme vigilance regarding the body as a dualism based on the body being despised in ascetic traditions. The Desert Fathers did not view the body as irrelevant to human personhood. Living as a monk in the desert exposed the “inextricable interdependence of body and soul; the body was regarded as a field to cultivate and to make humble so that humility could be brought to the soul” (Brown 1988:236).

Sexual fantasies were an indication of changes taking place within the soul in the “obscure but crucial frontier-zone between body and spirit”. Even the expression of love for God sometimes took on an erotic dimension as previously illustrated in the poetry of Symeon the New Theologian. Brown (1988:237) writes that “the huge labor of the monastic life happened because the body could never be abandoned”. He refers to the “Ladder of Divine Ascent” of John Climacus (579 – 649) as a “masterpiece of Byzantine spiritual guidance” in which he wrote about his astonishment “that the immortal spirit can be purified and refined by clay”. His inheritance from the desert tradition was that body and soul could be encompassed by the power of Christ, and that the body can share in the transformation of the human person, overcoming the last outpost of the own will (Brown 1988:238). The desert was the antithesis to the city and the alternative to the social structures of the world. Brown (1988:218) writes that by moving from the “world” to the desert, “the ascetic mobilized his physical person as a whole, and in the image of the person current in ascetic circles, food and the unending battle with the ache of fasting always counted more than did the sexual drive”. The belief in Egypt and other places was that Adam and Eve’s first sin was not a sexual act, but the greed for food. The ascetics hoped for a transformation of their bodies through self-mortification, to serve as a promise of what was to come, namely, the eventual transfiguration of their bodies on the day of Resurrection (Brown 1988:222).

In late antiquity it was thought that the body was running on its own heat with only the necessary nourishment to keep the heat alive. Too much food created a surplus of energy which manifested in anger, physical appetite, and sexual urges. The desert monk tried to remake his body by eating less, and in so doing restore the human person, body and soul to its original, uncorrupted state (Brown 1988:223). Long fasts and sleepless nights slowed down the body of the younger monks, reducing their sexual desires. Sexual urges and fantasy became a “privileged ideogram” of the unopened heart — the private will resisting final surrender (Brown 1988:230). The aim of spiritual guidance was the complete exposure of the inner world of the monk, including their sexual thoughts. Once sexual fantasy subsided and nightly emissions ceased, it was an indication of a surrender of the private will and attaining a purity of heart. The last traces of sexual fantasy are surrendered, a process which began with the surrender of all private wealth. Brown (1988:229) writes that the greatest achievement of the Desert Fathers was the “cultura Dei”, a “non-literate, verbal interchange of a monastic ‘art of thought’, moving away from a culture of the book”. He continues that “the monk’s own heart was the new book” and refers to Ware who described the notion of heart as the “meeting point between body and soul, between the subconscious, the conscious and the supraconscious, between the human and the divine” (Brown 1988:228). That is also why he writes that theologians from an ascetic background were likely to debate the issue with less ferocity, since the merger of the divine and human in one body was “sensed by them as a haunting emblem of the enigmatic joining of body and soul within themselves” (Brown 1988:236).

3.2.5 Athanasius: man as body

When Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria in 328, three years after the council of Nicea, he stepped into a fray where Hellenised Christians were increasingly caught in confusion between the Nicene credo and the desert fathers’ seemingly different viewpoints concerning the body. The Nicene credos viewed, by implication, all matter to be good (God became incarnate in a human body), while the desert fathers severely disciplined their bodies, which suggests that matter stood in the way of following God (Pettersen 1990:1). In his “Contra Gentes” he writes that “the body lives a life that is both secure and most precarious”, being created by God and at the same time dependent for its continued existence on the will of God. The body was so significant that the divine Logos became incarnate or embodied (Pettersen 1990:6). In this regard Athanasius expounded the doctrine of ‘creatio ex nihilo’, making a

definite distinction between God and creation, between “the uncreated, non-contingent and asomatic Creator, and contingent and somatic creation, called into being from nothing by the will of God” (Pettersen 1990:5). The Logos is the Creator and the Saviour, creating the world and becoming incarnate without any discontinuity between the Creator and the Saviour’s work. Salvation is then not an escape from the world, but is achieved within the world (Pettersen 1990:18).

Body and soul form part of the created world; this is in contrast to Hellenistic dualism where they oppose each other. Pettersen (1990:21) writes that Athanasius’ theology is “startling” within the context of the fourth century. He used the doctrine of “*creatio ex nihilo*” to drastically break from Neo-Platonism and from the “Christian Platonism of his Origenistic predecessors. According to the doctrine, the body is good since God cannot create evil, and it “naturally belongs and properly exists with its soul”. He viewed true humanity as both corporeal and incorporeal, that is, emotions and thoughts are as important as actions (involving the body). He resisted a Hellenistic dualism that associates the body with sin, correlates the soul with the divine, and the body with the world.

A human being is not a discarnate soul, since, according to Athanasius, God created an incarnate soul; only embodiment can facilitate the deliberation of God (Pettersen 1990:23). The soul without its body is “in the limbo of death”. This implies that the complete person, namely body and soul, is in the grip of sin and that God saves the whole of the human being. Pettersen (1990:23) continues that to save only the soul is to deprive the soul of its “means of physical expression”, and for Athanasius, that was no salvation at all. Death is irrational, since it separates the soul (which animates the body) from the body (which is an organ of expression for the soul); the Resurrection therefore is “the re-integration of the incorporeal soul with a new corporeality” (Pettersen 1990:25). The body is “a person’s physical prerequisite to a full existence” (Pettersen 1990:30). The body (*soma*) is a person’s instrument to do good and evil. It is “the immediate physical source of actual deeds”, and was used by Athanasius to indicate “the concreteness of the divine Logos’ physical presence” (Pettersen 1990:27). A “new corporeality” attained through the Resurrection does not imply that a person is freed from the physical body, but rather, that the body is liberated from its material decay with a renewal and redirection of the physicality of the body to worship God (Pettersen 1990:28).

Athanasius' anthropology was in stark contrast to the Gnostics of his time, and a radical break from Platonism and early Christian Platonism. The Gnostics had no notion of "life of a person as body", but focussed on a "flight from the particular" (Pettersen 1990:79). He continues that Athanasius was concerned with the salvation of body and soul, the transformation of matter, and not the transformation from matter. In his anthropology, the body has a functional and substantive nature, both in the way it is (being) in the world, and in the way it is (being) in a relationship with the cosmos, the self, and the Creator. Function is related to substance and substance to function. Pettersen (1990:81) refers to Louth who pointed out that Athanasius was the first to expound the significance of the doctrine of an individual's "creation ex nihilo", where "man as body" is a witness to a transcendent and immanent God.

At the same time, it encounters God as the "generator and basis for hope", since the body is experienced as "trustworthy and viable". "Man as body" is a witness to God as the Creator, not only through its acts, but also through its very self. Pettersen (1990:84) writes that "in the body being its self, the body witnesses to God who has made its true self". The relationship of a person to self "is a friendly and creative intercommunication between spirit and matter", where the body is under the priestly and directive force of the soul (Pettersen 1990:86). In *Contra Gentes*, chapter 31 this is clearly expounded, "where man uses his soul and his intellect to determine what is for the good and what for the bad of his own body" (Pettersen 1990:85). "Man as body" offers the body to God, and uses the same body to translate God as incarnate (Pettersen 1990:84). Each person, made in the image of God then realises the Logos as Creator.

Although Athanasius does not explicitly discuss the relationship of man to the world, it is possible to conclude from his thinking that in the same way as a person should not exploit the body, he/she should not exploit the world. Pettersen (1990:88) writes that for Athanasius "'man as body' is rooted in this world and can transform it"; in their bodily relation to the world, a person carries 'this worldly' relevance and an 'other worldly' hope. Creation is full of potential, an open system that is not perfect, but perfectible in the sense that it is open to a "fuller presence of God". This potential of the cosmos "is realised when man's free will combines with the creative grace of God" (Pettersen 1990:89). Evil is the result of sin, the abuse of a person's free will, and a misdirection of the good God had created in all (Pettersen 1990:97). The soul and the body may do good or evil. For Athanasius, the difference between

good and evil acts lies in the “respective ultimacy and instrumentality of the soul and its body” (Pettersen 1990:103). Sin then is the alienation of the person, as body and soul, from God.

Salvation is gradually affected in the body through self-control. The soul can fulfil its proper function and “a person becomes fully himself or herself in the unity of body and soul” (Pettersen 1990:104). This salvation is manifested in the individual and in society since a person “as body” is made available to others and to the cosmos. Salvation is not a flight from the material and from what is human. It is “the realising and sharing of God in what is human” (Pettersen 1990:107). God the Logos is central to Athanasius’ doctrine, “the Logos made flesh recreates humanity and human history”. The body, and the acts of the body, play a crucial role in the social dimensions of life. Pettersen (1990:109) writes that “it is this frail and fragile body that the Logos calls back into the being of God, by his becoming man”. He continues that the body is “a necessary part in human condition and of authentic existence. It is not dematerialised in theological usage, nor made to comprehend the whole person: it gains its theological significance as a person’s means of concrete and responsible service to God”.

3.2.6 Augustine: the inner man and his body

3.2.6.1 The body and soul

Augustine broke with tradition regarding the practical implementations of the body in a cosmic context and this is where the beginnings of a clear Western tradition can be distinguished (Louth 1997:117). Augustine pointed out that there is no prescribed bodily posture in prayer, that the traditional stance is only symbolic since God is present everywhere; and when one prays, it is “to put oneself in that posture that is the most conducive to the soul’s desire to pray”. Augustine broke with the doctrine of the double creation, and worked within the doctrine of creation and fall, “what is created is unambiguously good, and that includes physicality and sexuality; evil is a result of the Fall” (Louth 1997:118). In this way Augustine also broke from the traditional perception of the body as a reflection of the cosmos through which the dualities of the fallen human condition can be overcome. The significance lies in the notion of inwardness — in inwardness the human person and his/her body, which mirrors the cosmos, fades away.

Nightingale (2011:106) writes that Augustine veered away from the theology at the time by introducing “a radically new discourse of mental interiority” where his conception of the inner man and the outer man allows the outer to bleed into the inner. It is not about equating a human being only to his mind; Augustine often enticed Christians to turn inward, and developed an argument with words like the “inner man”, the “inner voice”, and the “inner heart” (Nightingale 2011:123). Paul associated mind with the inner man and viewed his flesh as disobedient and full of sin, whereas Augustine believed that the mind is both — inner and outer. He finds himself “both inside and outside his mind” in searching for the self inside his own memory, a convergence of the body and soul (Nightingale 2011:125). Augustine perceives the human being as a mixture of soul and body.

The soul, which includes the mind and the will, senses the body and the world it lives in, and these sensations leaves impressions of “the bodily realm in the memory”, where memory belongs to the outer man. Nightingale (2011:128) continues that Augustine searches for his self in his memory, which is “outer insofar as it brings the world in”, caused by the interface of the body and the soul. This interface defies the boundaries between the outer man and the inner man, meaning that “the mind is not fully inner, nor is the body fully outer”. Nightingale (2011:110) refers to the “I” that Augustine is searching for as a “moving target”. A unified self remains elusive. She continues that in the repeated use of the word “ego”, Augustine emphasises “the fragmentation of the self” and that his “Confessions” mirror “this tension between fragmentation and unification, between dispersion and self-collection, between time and eternity”. Her interpretation of the inner and outer man is not as clear cut as that of Louth (1997:119), who argues that Augustine sees a person as “a spiritual being defined by inwardness”. The bodily is outward and easier to comprehend than the simplicity of the spiritual. The bodily can distract from the spiritual by providing a fake inwardness causing the spiritual self to lose itself. Asceticism can provide a kind of effortless interiority where the soul is in control of the body, but asceticism is not meant to overcome duality, which is implicit in the traditional cosmic view. Inwardness does not mean individualism. Louth (1997:119) writes that “effortless interiority renders the body ‘transparent’, so to speak, and makes possible a community between souls that have been cut off from one another by the opacity of the fallen body”.

Augustine viewed the body and the soul as being married to each other, although he did uphold the Platonic body-soul dualism throughout his lifetime. Nightingale (2011:107)

continues that he argued against the Platonists by uplifting the status of the body as a “fit and necessary partner of the soul”. In his *Sermo* (155.14.15) Augustine wrote about his flesh as his eternal friend: “Take away death, and the body is good. When this enemy death is removed, my flesh will be my friend for eternity. For nobody hates his own flesh. Though ‘the spirit lusts against the body, and the flesh lusts against the spirit’, this is only a marital quarrel within the household. The husband argues but seeks concord and not dissolution” (Nightingale 2011:107). She continues that there cannot be a permanent divorce between the body and the soul, since humans receive their bodies back at the end of time and that at resurrection, the soul returns to its body which it left at death. Augustine insisted that everyone should love their bodies and wrote about “the sweet marriage bond of body and soul” (*carnis et animae dulce consortium*), which was in stark contrast to the Platonists’ view that the soul should flee from the body, where it is imprisoned (Nightingale 2011:107). The body should not be despised, but it is “mortal and corruptible, and its heavy weight pulls the soul down” (Nightingale 2011:108).

3.2.6.2 The resurrected “transhuman” body

In her book, *Once out of nature. Augustine on Time and the Body*, Andrea Nightingale puts together a powerful argument based on an interdisciplinary approach, including philosophy, sociology, literary theory, and social history. She argues that Augustine’s notion of embodiment cannot be understood without giving attention to the double temporalisation of earthly time and psychic time. These two different temporalities have various affects on how human beings relate to themselves and to nature (Nightingale 2011:9). Brown (2012:32) writes that Nightingale has “defly unravelled” the dilemma Augustine faced, namely that one cannot merely flee from the material world. She did this by following the thread in Augustine’s complex thought “due to modern preoccupations with embodiment and with the place of humans in the ecosystem”. Augustine viewed humans as “embodied souls” living in time, but the soul and the body experience time in different ways. Nightingale (2011:2) continues that from Augustine’s viewpoint, “there is no escape from the body, although there is an eventual escape from time”.

She finds it surprising that with the exception of Derrida’s, *Circumfession* (1991/1993), scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have neglected the body in their writings about language, textuality, narrative, memory and temporality. Nightingale (2011:3)

interprets humans in Augustine's work as "extraterrestrials who have "fallen" on a land where they do not belong...earth is a place of unbelonging". This she derives from Augustine's description of humans as "resident aliens" (*peregrinate*) on earth, who are exiled from Eden, deformed by sin, and who "must toil on this earthly journey toward a final resting place in heaven". We can be very critical of Augustine's description of humans' unbelonging on earth, but Nightingale (2011:3) poignantly asks if we are so much more comfortable with our bodies or in touch with nature in this sexually liberated age? She views the technological alteration of the human body and of the earth as the modern response to "our estrangement from the natural world", illustrating our ambivalent relationship to our bodies and the world (Nightingale 2011:4). Modern technology endeavours to create a transhuman that will not age and will transcend the earth. She continues that Augustine presented two models of transhumans: Adam and Eve in Eden, and the resurrected saints. Adam and Eve had "immortal bodies and little sense of time", and the resurrected saints at the end of time will be "once and for all out of nature".

In Augustine's view, humans and transhumans are out of nature, and "though their bodies are (temporarily) "in" nature, humans are not "of" nature" (Nightingale 2011:5). God will create a resurrected body that is transhuman, one that "dwells outside time and nature" (Nightingale 2011:7). She continues that Augustine was awaiting a "perfect, unearthly body", one which God was going to make by taking human bodily matter "out of the food chain" to create a resurrected body. Nightingale (2011:43) refers to Carolyn Bynum who has illustrated how eating and digestion were central themes in theological debates of the resurrected body. The story of Jonah and the whale was evidence that every part of the human body would be resurrected, just as Jonah was regurgitated whole and alive after three days. Nightingale continues that "the earthly world devours the body" referring to the human body on earth which is part of the food chain, eaten by worms and insects while alive, and devoured completely by other beasts after death. The resurrected body is taken out of the food chain, out of nature as it is illustrated in iconography, for example the mosaic of the Last Judgement in the cathedral at Torcello, in which animals are regurgitating various body parts (Nightingale 2011:44).

Augustine provided a detailed account on the characteristics of this resurrected "transhuman" body. Nightingale (2011:44) writes that his notion of the resurrected body influenced the complete scholastic discourse in the Middle Ages. In his *City of God*, chapter 22, Augustine

wrote that all parts of the human body will be restored by God, that it will look like the original body, but without any deformities and of course it would not be ugly (Nightingale 2011:45). Augustine also proposed that all these resurrected bodies will be around 30 years of age, corresponding with the age of Jesus when he died. Nightingale (2011:47) writes that his doctrine reflects humans' fear of death and decay and also "marks a rejection of the earthly world that grounds our life". She continues that Augustine made a distinction between the utility and beauty of the human body with utility falling away. Here she refers to Augustine who wrote: "we can easily infer that in the design of the human body dignity was a more important consideration than utility...and a time will come when we will enjoy each other's beauty for itself alone, without lust". It is fascinating that in his description of the resurrected body all the inner organs will be visible. Nightingale (2011:14) writes that the saints will "admire the beauty of each other's bodies, whose inner organs are now visible: the stomach, intestines, womb, etcetera".

3.2.6.3 The body and sexual desire

Louth (1997:118) is of the opinion that Augustine most profoundly challenged the mythology of virginity, even though his own conversion was one of sexual continence. At first he shared the viewpoint of Ambrose and Jerome that Adam and Eve were created to be a virginal couple, but later on he rejected this overemphasis of virginity. Adam and Eve would have had children in Paradise, were it not for the Fall, but without lust. Nightingale (2011:30) writes that Adam was able to move his genitals at his will as he would move a hand or foot, but without "libido". She continues that they did not experience orgasm, but performed sex with a "tranquillity of mind". Augustine writes in *City of God*, chapter 14 that "without the alluring stimulation of passion, the husband would have relaxed on his wife's bosom in tranquillity of mind". Brown (1988:401) writes that in comparison to contemporaries, like Gregory of Nyssa, and even Ambrose and Jerome, who would never have linked marriage and intercourse with paradise (sexuality and marriage followed the Fall and therefore represented humans lapsed from their "angelic" state), Augustine articulated a much more "sociable and full-blooded vision". He portrayed them with similar bodies and sexual traits as other flesh and bones human beings. Nightingale (2011:27) writes that Augustine asserted that they had "animal bodies"; they were immortal and unaffected by pain and disintegration. She continues that they were created as adults and had no conception of earthly or psychic time. Nightingale (2011:33) writes that this indicated that they were not ordinary animals,

since, paradoxically, they could procreate, eat and drink, but did not experience lust, disease, hunger, thirst or aging. She continues that Augustine “wrested Adam and Eve out of nature” and elevated them from humans to transhumans.

God created them for the joys of society (Brown 1988:400). Augustine was, however uncomfortable with the idea of sexual intercourse in marriage, regarding the sexual urge as disruptive and ranked friendship in marriage higher than the sexual act. He regarded the social bonds in Roman society as important to keep the Catholic Church united, and the order of the household was more important than the sexual bond (Brown 1988:404). Augustine did not believe that Adam and Eve had an angelic state before they fell into a physical state. Humans were not essentially spiritual beings without sexual and social needs. He believed that they “enjoyed a harmonious unity of body and soul”, and in the same way that they followed the will of God, their bodies followed the dictation of their will (Brown 1988:405). The distortion of the human will and the disharmony present at all levels marked the condition of the Fall. Death was an unnatural occurrence and disrupted the longing of the soul to peacefully co-exist with the body; for Augustine, death was a bitter indication of human frailty. Sexual desire stood out for him as “an exceptionally sharply delineated symptom of Adam’s fall”, and was an indication of the disconnect between sexual feelings and human will (Brown 1988:406). He himself still struggled with sexual fantasies accompanied by the occasional wet dream.

Someone like Julian, bishop of Eclanum in southern Italy took the stand in line with Pelagius, believing that sexuality could be amended by human will and that it could be physiologically explained as “a chosen instrument of any self-respecting marriage” (Brown 1988:416). Augustine, in contrast argued that sexual desire was a “*poenareciproca*”, a punishment fitting the crime, something that could not be controlled by human will and a symptom of Adam’s act of disobedience. It was a psychological doctrine indicating for the first time that the cause of these psychosomatic symptoms were situated deep within the self, and mirrored an “unhealed fissure in the soul”. The “flesh” in Paul’s letters was not merely the body, but everything leading the self to choose its own will and not the will of God (Brown 1988:418). Sexuality was placed at the core of the human person. Brown (1988:422) writes that for Augustine, sexuality “spoke, with terrible precision, of one single, decisive event within the soul. It echoed in the body the unalterable consequence of mankind’s first sin”.

Augustine aspired to, and hoped for unity through his work. He firmly believed that humans were created to embrace the world in spite of the tragic flaw of concupiscence. Augustine wrote that the body is “like your wife...Love it, rebuke it; let it be formed into one bond of body and soul, one bond of married concord...Learn to master what you will receive as a united whole...” (Brown 1988:426). The body had to be loved and cherished, but also disciplined. Through his writing, Augustine led in the “hard male puritanism” and “created a darkened humanism that linked the pre-Christian past to a Christian present in a common distrust of sexual pleasure” (Brown 1988:426). His inheritance was a heavy legacy of sexual shame. Brown (1988:432) argues that by the time Augustine featured, the ancient notion of personhood had been fractured and the human person had been detached from the natural world. The body was the uncomfortable reminder of humans’ kinship with animals. As Pope Gregory I, a follower of Augustine pointed out, it was the fault line in their will that kept humans away from the sacred, and not the connection to their physical bodies. A new sensibility to nudity followed in late antiquity and the body was carefully clothed so that it would be hidden (Brown 1988:438).

3.2.6.4 Augustine’s theory of time and embodiment

What is Augustine’s theory of time and its relevance to his notion of embodiment? Nightingale (2011:16) writes that his theory of time is both theological and philosophical. It is theological because experiencing time is a punishment for original sin and “being temporalized is a condition of exile from the eternal presence of God”, and this makes bodily presence problematic — “being *here* in a body”. Nightingale (2011:56) writes that scholars traditionally made a distinction between subjective and objective time, where the latter was seen as a cosmic event that was controlled by the movement of celestial bodies. She continues that Augustine, however, put the focus on “internal time-consciousness” in his theory of mental distention in *Confessions*. He turned away from the notion of time governed by planets and focussed on animal bodies on earth that age and die, attending to “biological rather than cosmological bodies”. Augustine then presented a heterochronic theory of time. Nightingale (2011:8) refers to his temporality of the birth, aging and death of all living things in nature as “earthly time”. She refers to his theory on inner-time consciousness with the focus on the psyche as “psychic time”. She continues that Augustine put the notion forward that the mind is always “distended” (“stretched”/“swelling outward”) into the past and the

future through memory and expectation, which means that the mind has no hold on the present.

According to Nightingale (2011:8), this has the psychological consequence that “the distended mind cannot experience divine presence in spite of its drive toward the metaphysics of presence” and that the mind “cannot dwell in the here and the now of the body” — the mind distends away from bodily presence. This has various implications on how humans relate to themselves and to the world they live in. This heterochronic theory of time is illustrated in Augustine’s sermon on Psalm 121 (Nightingale 2011:60). In this sermon, he pointed out to the congregation how time was passing while they listened to him. The point was that the body is always changing. He then discussed the mutability of the soul with the soul being “cleaved apart and distended” and the mind racing with various thoughts and desires. The mutability of the soul is different to that of the body. Soul is ageless and does not die. It is, however, affected by the experiences of the body. Nightingale continues that the mind and the soul experience the world differently from the way the body experiences the world. The mind develops a memory of the past and an expectation for the future in every experience. This sermon demonstrates the “interface between earthly time and psychic time in human life: the body ages in earthly time, while the mind distends in psychic time” (Nightingale 2011:61). Augustine argued that the mind experiences the present in a threefold way: the “present of the past” (memory), the “present of the present” (attention), and the “present of the future” (expectation), which suggests that it is impossible for humans to live in the present based on this mental distention (Nightingale 2012:80). “Attention” (*attention*), however, does not fade away, but endures because it is grounded in the body, a body that is intimately connected to the here and now (Nightingale 2011:86). This is why Nightingale argues that we can only understand Augustine’s notion of embodiment by interpreting it based on his theory of heterochronic time. She summarises it as follows: “The distention of the mind pulls humans away from self-presence: we cannot coincide with ourselves. This gives us the sense of being out of nature. Yet, because we have earthly bodies, we are part of nature. As beings living in two different time zones, we are both in and out of nature” (Nightingale 2011:104).

3.2.6.5 The bodies of martyrs

Nightingale (2011:20) refers to Pierre Bourdieu (1990) who wrote that the body “incorporates” beliefs in ritual practices, with some scholars arguing that “the analysis of ancient rituals should not privilege texts and discourses over bodily practices”. The mortified bodies of ascetics and the holy bodies of martyrs (the cult of relics) were two rituals which made the body less earthy. She refers to Patricia Cox Miller, who wrote that “when a martyr’s dust, bone or body becomes the center of cultic activity and reverence, it loses its character as a natural body and begins to function as a site of religious contact...a locus and mediator of spiritual presence and power”. Nightingale (2011:169) writes that “the past, present and future meets in the *place* where these buried corpses or bodily parts are buried”. Although Augustine maintained in his early writings that the time of miracles had passed, he changed his opinion in later years believing that “the shrines of martyrs generated divine miracles” even though Christians were not supposed to worship martyrs (Nightingale 2011:173). She continues that he portrayed bodily relics as “lifeless flesh adorned with a powerful mark of divinity”.

Mastery of the body was also a transformation of the self. She continues that in Augustine’s view celibacy moved him towards unity. Augustine’s quest for celibacy was not primarily about the connection with other people, but “the problem of the relationship of oneself to oneself” (Nightingale 2011:186). She also refers to Foucault who maintained that Christians had a different “epistemological condition” to pagans, one in which their thoughts, (their) bodies and (their) desires became objects that were endlessly analysed and vigorously controlled (Nightingale 2011:149). These rituals “brought the divine down to earth or lifted the body up to heaven”. Nightingale points out that it is also a mirror of the ambivalent attitude of Christians towards nature (Nightingale 2011:195).

3.2.6.6 Augustine and female mysticism

Louth (1997:129) interprets the changes reflected by the body as moving on an axis, from viewing the body as a microcosm mirroring the cosmos to regarding the body as an interpreter of human inwardness. Louth (1997:125) is of the opinion that Augustine’s notion of inwardness, which includes the view of the body as a way to communicate, combined with the “freeing of the Eucharist from its traditional liturgical and symbolic context” could

explain the profound significance of the bodily in female mysticism during the Middle Ages. This significance was based on physical effects like stigmata, which manifested mainly in women — only women's wounds periodically bled on Fridays or on Good Friday. It also manifested in extreme asceticism, which was more prominent among woman saints, as well as the importance of feeding and nourishment. It could possibly be attributed to self-hatred whereby the misogyny of a male-dominated medieval Christianity had been internalised.

Louth (1997:126) refers to the work of Caroline Bynum who ascribes the use of bodily symbolism and practice as an attempt to gain access to power in a male-dominated society, where women were even more marginalised, and to take control of their lives. By focussing on the body and on food, women were offered strategies to gain more access to power. The body is often interpreted as feminine, opposed to the masculine mind; traditionally, the preparation of food was the domain of women. The assimilation of Christ into their bodies through the stigmata and periodical bleeding, afforded them a charismatic authority based on these experiences. Women bled and produced milk, and in medieval art, wounds and breasts were interchangeable symbols. The body and its functions became an expression of inward feeling, as Louth (1997:126) writes: “the body nourishes and is nourished, it is vulnerable, it suffers”. The body on the Cross is a suffering body that manifests the love of God through the Incarnation of God. The individual human body is redeemed and becomes a source of redemption through its assimilation into the suffering body.

3.3 The body during the Middle Ages

Bynum (1998:162) argues that the body achieved a new religious importance from 1200 – 1500, that female spirituality was even more bodily, and that because of certain phenomena attributed to women, a turning point came about in the history of the body in the West. Medieval spirituality, especially female spirituality was more somatic, not only because of the association of “female with the fleshy”, but also because in theology, natural philosophy, and folk tradition the dominant concept of a person was that of a body and soul, a psychosomatic unity. There was an emphasis on misogyny and dualism, where the body was portrayed in twelfth- and thirteenth-century-literature not only as dust, but as rotten. The spirit and body were at war with each other, while the soul was described as a noble creature blackened by the body. Virginity and chastity were almost considered as a requirement for sanctity (Bynum 1998:174).

The concepts of body and of woman in medieval times were, however, more complex and Bynum (1998:175) argues that “neither medieval gender contrasts nor medieval notion of soul and body were as dichotomous as we have been led to think by projecting modern contrasts back onto them”. The association of woman with the body was extrapolated on the humanity of Christ, even to the extent that the flesh of Christ was treated as female in its nurturing and bleeding with regard to its redemptive aspects. Bynum (1998:175) writes that only by considering the mixing of genders in medieval times, particularly after 1200, can one comprehend how mystical women could fuse with the body of Christ, even though they could never forget the maleness of Christ. “Women mystics often simply became the flesh of Christ, because their flesh could do what his could do: bleed, feed, die and give life to others.” (Bynum 1998:188).

The historical beginnings of certain bodily events like stigmata and miraculous lactation appear to be between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, when extraordinary focus was placed on the female body. During this time writers tried to portray the body in a positive light, bridging the gap between the material and spiritual. This should not have been a surprise in a religion where one of its main pillars is the doctrine of Incarnation, “the enfleshing of its God”. In a way, persons were considered to be their bodies. In several conciliar and papal pronouncements, it was written that the faithful, as well as the damned were to be resurrected in their bodies, and that the “body sinned or gained merit alongside soul and must, therefore, also receive reward or punishment eternally”. (Bynum 1998:190). When writing on the resurrection of the body and on embryology, theologians like Albert the Great, Giles of Rome, and Richard of Middleton strongly advocated a link between the two since both topics were relevant to the issue of the identity and nature of personhood. Aquinas, in his *Summa contra gentiles* (book 2, chapter 56 to 90) expressed his belief that issues of eschatology, embryology, and psychology should be resolved together.

Bynum (1998:191) continues that in discussions on the doctrine of eschatology and the resurrection of the body in this period, the body was essential to a theory of personhood and required a tight combination of body and soul. She refers to Aquinas who made use of the Aristotelian form/matter dichotomy to explain that the resurrection of the body was required after the Last Judgement. He held the opinion that the soul as form survives after the body dies, but that the complete person only exists until the body as matter is restored to its form. He wrote that “the soul...is not the full man and my soul is not I” (Bynum 1998:192).

Theologians were curious about the body and its boundaries and asked whether there would be two genders after the resurrection, if the glorified body would be able to close and open its eyes, what age people in heaven would be, and whether the bodies of martyrs would retain their wounds after the resurrection. Bynum (1998:194) writes that theologians agreed that humans would be resurrected as two sexes and that martyrs would keep their wounds and other distinct bodily features. This also explains why “the body as being the conveyer of personal specificity” is necessary to understand why relics were treated as (if they were the) saints.

Bynum (1998:196) emphasises that in spite of the association of the female bodily experience with the union with God in the late Middle Ages, one must not forget that man was considered to be superior to woman, and body was still regarded as inferior to soul. With impressive insight, she concludes that “because preachers, confessors and spiritual directors assumed the person to be a psychosomatic unity, they not only read unusual bodily events as expression of soul, but also expected body itself to offer a means of access to the divine. Because they worshiped a God who became incarnate and died for the sin of others, they viewed all bodily events — the hideous wounds of martyrs or stigmatics as well as the rosy-faced beauty of virgins — as possible manifestations of grace”.

3.4 The body and the Reformation

In Luther’s writings, his opinion is evident that the body’s position as part of essential humanness is inferior to that of the spirit and the soul. He also distinguished between carnal and spiritual; he did not think that carnal equates bodily desire. It is a reference to the self that ignores the will of God. Sin is therefore connected to the will, and not primarily an expression of fleshy desire (Tripp 1997:134). He believed that the life of faith is for the whole person (Tripp 1997:135). He also affirmed corporeality in his stance on dance, and portrayed heaven as place of happy dancing. Luther, however, regarded sexual desire as so powerful that only a few could live a chaste life; and marriage, for most people, was a way to channel sexual activity (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:63). She continues that Luther viewed marital sex as a positive good, not only for procreation, but also because it led to greater affection between man and wife, and harmony at home.

In his book of 1523, *Little book of instruction on how lads should be Christianly taught and brought up*, the crucial lesson that Zwingli conveyed is that God can be known through the created world, and that friendship with the divine does not only require things needed by the soul, but also things needed by the body (Tripp 1997:137). He expressed a strong opinion about the vigorous exercise (running, jumping, stone-throwing, wrestling) a “right-minded boy” should partake in, and according to Tripp, it is clear that Zwingli valued the body and drew comparisons between the body and society.

Calvin regarded the body as part of the divine image although it is subsidiary to the essence of humanity (Tripp 1997:138). He had a much more demure attitude towards the body compared to Zwingli and Luther, and regarded dancing as a prelude to intercourse that could lure the faithful away. Tripp (1997:140) writes that Calvin’s interest was mainly in wholeness and moral integrity, even though he ranked the body lower than the soul. His thought was that the individual body is connected to the communal body of the church, and to society. Tripp (1997:140) continues that “Calvin could envisage a new and glorious body politic growing up in a life springing from baptism and fed by the Eucharist, but for the present every Christian must endure the tension of belonging to two bodies”. Calvin was more subdued than Luther regarding the virtue of marital sex and warned against “extreme lewdness”, writing about “men and women raging with boiling lust [who] meet together as brute beasts”. English Puritans later referred to this idea as “matrimonial chastity” (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:64). Sewell (2011:171) writes that Calvin’s writings on marital sexual behaviour is “unfortunately negative” and reflects a “Platonic dislike of bodiliness”.

Calvin definitely had a loathing of the body and wished to escape it (Sewell 2011:68). She refers to the use of the prison metaphor in his writings: “As long as it [our spirit] is in the body it exerts its own powers; but when it quits this prison-house it returns to God.” He calls the body “this prison of clay” (Sewell 2011:46). In the majority of cases Calvin employs the prison metaphor to denote the body as a prison or that the body is a vessel of sin and corruption. In its totality he used this metaphor to indicate fallen nature (Sewell 2011:48). She writes that Calvin did not specify any negative experiences in connection to gender or sexuality when he used the prison metaphor (Sewell 2011:190).

Calvin himself suffered from various illnesses like weakness of the stomach and headaches. There is speculation that his death was caused by septic shock caused by bacteria in his bloodstream, or that he died because of pulmonary tuberculosis (Sewell 2011:83). She

continues that Calvin's poor state of health did not encourage him to explore a more positive view of the body, in line with the medical theories of his time that portrayed the vulnerability of the body and the instability of emotional life (Sewell 2011:102). He always connected "bodily nakedness" after the Fall to sin, and as a disgrace to human dignity, with the male and female sexual organs an ultimate expression of this disgrace. Nakedness is a metaphor for standing guilty before God (Sewell 2011:205). She concludes that for Calvin the soul is imprisoned in the body and enslaved to the body. He was very reluctant to speak about the body, if not in combination with the soul, and only when relevant to living this life. In eternity, however, the body will not be without the soul, and the soul will not be without the body (Sewell 2011:221).

Tripp (1997:147) writes that in early Protestant Christianity there was "a discovery, however inconsistent or uneven, of a sense of body in the person, in the general community, in the church, in the Eucharist". Here he refers to the influence of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. During a later period when Protestantism became more rational and started to fear the body more, it was still possible for someone like Pestalozzi to maintain the assertion of the wholeness of humanity in its meeting with God. Tripp (1997:133) argues that the doctrine of Incarnation, God made flesh "must be concerned with the body in every sense".

Most of the churches in Protestant Europe were considered to be state churches, and their officials considered to be state employees who announced state laws from the pulpit (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:93). Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli and other reformers were referred to as "magisterials", since they held the belief that the state and its officials were the allies of the church. Wiesner-Hanks (2000:61) writes that the control of sexual behaviour, that is, the regulation of the bodies of Protestants, was as important as the regulation of doctrine. Special courts were established with wide-ranging power. Their power extended to marriage and matters to do with marriage, as well as issues regarding morality. The first such court was a marriage court established by Zwingli in Zurich in 1525, and served as a prototype for similar courts in the rest of Switzerland and Germany (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:67). None of the members of this court were professional jurists, but belonged to the city council and the clergy. It did not only handle marriage cases, but also oversaw cases that dealt with prostitution, fornication, blasphemy, non-attendance at church, and gambling. Although there were similarities between the Catholic Church and the Protestants when it came to social disciplining and confessionalisation with regards to the roots of gender differences and its

implications, and the differences between “natural” and “unnatural” sexual behaviour, the institutions and ideas of Protestants were different (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:62).

Calvinist Protestants established consistories to guard doctrine and morals, whereas in Germany, the consistory was appointed by the ruler. Wiesner-Hanks (2000:69) continues that although the Scots Parliament did not adopt the whole *Book of Discipline* by Calvin in 1560, through the influence of the church, however, adultery, incest and witchcraft were made capital offences, and blasphemy was illegal. She writes that “courts, consistories and congregations are generally viewed as the main institutions of social discipline and the regulation of sexuality in Protestant Europe” (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:71). Less important institutions also impacted on people’s behaviour and attitudes, for example, the printing press, whose involvement resulted in the distribution of broadsides, pamphlets, cheap copies of sermons, guides, and stories which communicated Protestant ideas about marriage and moral behaviour. These were also found in schools and were “important agents of instilling moral discipline and confessional conformity” (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:72). Certain trends regarding the regulation of sexuality (and the body) developed in Protestant Europe, and included trends about marriage, divorce, fornication and prostitution, as well as trends “enmeshed in specific political, economic and social circumstances”. The aims of individual judges also played a role in this regulation, because of their obsession with specific issues like sodomy, illegal births and witchcraft (Wiesner-Hanks 2000:73).

3.5 Dualism, ambiguity or unity?

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the trend to simply interpret centuries of Christian views on the body/soul as an antagonistic dualism. The feminist theologians Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart (1998:74) maintain that Pope John Paul II displayed the same deep ambiguity towards the body as revealed in the history of Christianity and write “that it is important to grasp that it is ambiguity, rather than through-going dualism, that characterizes this tradition”. They also argue that this ambiguity throughout the Christian history is linked to a deep suspicion of female bodiliness and “a complex, dialectical association of female bodiliness with imperfection and therefore anti-divinity”. Do we refer to these perceptions and experiences of the body/soul in Christian history as a dualism or an ambiguity or a unity; or should there be a more nuanced interpretation?

The interpretation of the body merely as a dualism/dichotomy does not recognise the complexity of the body in the history of Christianity. Christian faith communities were established in a context where different world-views were competing for dominance. The traditional Hebraic world-view held a holistic interpretation of the body and soul, and the emphasis (in the afterlife) was more on the resurrection of the body than the immortality of the soul. The world-view of the Roman Empire was dominant and only linked the body to the soul during its short existence. The body was regarded as unchanged and formless matter and had its rightful place in the chain that linked animals and gods. Deeply influential was the Greek notion of the pre-existence of the soul which transmigrated from body to body. In his writings, Plato refined this notion with his description of a true person as mind, imprisoned temporarily in the body. The intellect was seen as eternal and situated deep within the soul. He did not see the body as intrinsic to human personhood, but neither did he view it as evil. Add to this the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, which is supposed to imply the goodness of the body; and the possibility to transform the body, one senses the labyrinth of world-views and beliefs that influenced and confronted Christians of the early church. Within the Roman world-view the body was seen as fixed, and something to be administered, whereas someone like Paul did not think of the body as neutral matter, but as “a temple of the Holy Spirit”.

The picture emerging is too complex to assume that the perceptions of the body were purely dualistic. There were of course interpretations of the body that fit the mould of a dichotomy between body and soul, and matter and mind. In these interpretations, the body was despised and rejected. Plotinus, father of Neoplatonism was ashamed of his body. Philo, the Hellenised Jewish writer described the body as a “foul prison”, and evil by nature — a viewpoint the Gnostics strongly supported. Marcion of Sinope thought of the body as filled with excrement. Yet, at the same time, the Gnostics recognised divine power and spiritual roots in the upright posture of the body. This ambivalence is found in many of the writings of the early Church Fathers. Therefore, the interpretation of the Dessert Father’s extreme discipline as merely a hatred of the body, demeans their tradition; it is a superficial interpretation of the whole process of surrendering the self to God.

The question is whether it is possible to make a distinction between their perceptions of the body and their opinions about sexuality and desire? Early Christian communities were established in a Roman world where there was already an increase in moral strictness. The

emphasis on virginity, fidelity and continence in Christian communities, regardless of social class, gender or education strengthened these norms and set them apart from other religions; it distinguished them as followers of a true and universal religion. There was also a debate within the early church whether Adam and Eve had sexual intercourse before the Fall or not. Maximus the Confessor was of the opinion that any sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve was as a result of the Fall, whereas Irenaeus described them as sexual beings even before the Fall. Augustine initially agreed with Ambrose and Jerome that Adam and Eve were created as virgins, but later on changed his mind, and advocated that they would have had children in Paradise if it weren't for the Fall, the exception being that they would not have experienced any desire. Contemporaries of Augustine like Gregory of Nyssa would never have linked childbearing, sexual intercourse, and Paradise, since the Fall was a lapse from their angelic state. This new state was marked by sexuality and marriage.

Once again, a complex picture is emerging about opinions on sexuality, desire and procreation in the early church. Clement was convinced that the church will only survive through procreation. He had a positive view regarding the body and linked it to the divine image, and to sexuality; sexuality is seen as an expression of creativity, making humans co-creators with God. Although Tertullian cannot be described as a dualist (believing that the soul was moulded in the outer body as a concrete and subtle "body", and imploring Christians to "look to the body"), he nevertheless had a very negative opinion of sex. According to him, the body should be submitted to strict self-denial in order to clarify the soul, and that people should refrain from sexual desire, as it is dangerous. He was a misogynist and thought that women had a dangerous power to seduce. The aim of the severe discipline that the Desert Fathers imposed on their bodies was to reduce sexual desire as an indication of how far they have come in surrendering their will to the will of God. In spite of this strict regime, they did believe that the body and soul shared a momentum away from any dualist notion. Augustine developed the notion of inwardness, and with that placed sexuality at the centre of the human person. He had a profoundly negative interpretation of sexual desire, which he regarded as a fitting punishment for Adam and Eve's crime.

Peter Brown (1988:426) makes the harsh observation that Augustine left a heavy legacy of sexual shame that led to "hard male puritism"; while his remark is understandable and possibly true, it would be wrong to base Augustine's attitude on a body/soul dichotomy and label him as a dualist. He did perceive the human as a mixture of body and soul and saw the

body as a fit and necessary partner of the soul. In his work, he does not equate a human being only with his/her mind. He developed a sophisticated and radical new discourse on mental interiority. He viewed the soul as ageless and immortal, but affected by the experiences of the body. The Reformation endeavoured to control the body and its sexual desires, no matter whether there was a distrust or an appreciation of the body. Nakedness became a disgrace to human dignity and was a metaphor for standing guilty before God, like Adam and Eve after the Fall. Once again, a complex picture is emerging where there is a disconnect or fissure between the body and sexuality, between the body and its desires. This disconnect is not necessarily based on a dualism between body and soul, but on the belief that sexual desire distracts from surrendering one's own will to that of God. Sadly, women were seen as extremely powerful in luring men away from this purpose.

It is clear that women were in a subordinate position for centuries and that they were marginalised in a male-dominated society. The Roman Empire considered them to be failed males. In Christian communities, where obedience was expected to the call for fidelity, virginity and abstinence from both men and women equally, women were tainted as they were regarded to have the power to seduce men. Furthermore, they ranked "lower" in status, because they were associated with emotions and matter, while men possessed the "higher" mind. This dualism was supported and maintained by the doctrine of the double creation, the first of which was regarded as more fundamentally good, while the second was characterised by a sinful division between body and soul, male and female. This served as a powerful motivation for the cult of virginity, celibacy and abstinence in an effort to regain the impact of the first creation, when beings were spiritual and created in the image of God. Women regained some power during the Middle Ages when female spirituality became more somatic, and included bodily events like stigmata and spontaneous lactation. Women could never, however, escape the maleness of Christ, and a regard for men as superior. I fully agree with Isherwood and Stuart that a deep suspicion of female bodiliness characterised the interaction between men and women, but I am not convinced that it is one of the main reasons for the maintenance of the body/soul dualism or that the bodies of women were in general considered to be anti-divine. Reaching a conclusion does not form part of the scope of this research, and I believe that other socio-economic and cultural factors should be studied before a conclusion can be drawn.

Where Origen developed the doctrine of the double creation in an effort to provide a Christian understanding of cosmology, Athanasius used the doctrine of “creation ex nihilo” to make a clear distinction between the asomatic Creator and the somatic creation, called into being out of nothing by the sheer will of God. He considered body and soul as part of the created; the soul could only contemplate God in an incarnate state. The divine Logos considered the body as deeply significant to take on a human body and become incarnate. The “man as body” is a witness to the transcendent and immanent God. Augustine broke with these doctrines and worked with the doctrine of creation and Fall. He did not interpret the body as a reflection of the cosmos, in which the human body is a little body and the cosmos a great body, and both are forged by the indwelling of soul and reason. He developed the notion of inwardness. Earth was emphasised as a place of unbelonging, and the body became an uncomfortable reminder of the intimate tie between humans and other animals — the human person became detached from the natural world and the cosmos.

Dualism, ambiguity, unity or something else? It is clear that centuries of bodily perceptions cannot simply be labelled as a soul/body or mind/matter dualism. The picture emerging from reviewing the material is too complex, and ranges from bordering on pure hatred of the body to a deep appreciation (of the body). These views are embedded in a complex world-view, ranging from a consideration of the body within the cosmos, to a sophisticated map of mental interiority, calibrating between ideas of the body and cosmos as fixed to a world, and persons miraculously in flux. The dominant theological anthropology emanated from Augustine. It advocates that man is created (as man and woman) in the image of God (*imago Dei*), that the Fall happened because of sin, but that there is redemption and a new life in Christ. It is a theological anthropology where there is a complex interrelatedness between body, soul, spirit, and mind, where the body is often distrusted, and sometimes appreciated, and where there is a deep disconnect between the body and sexuality, and between the body and its desires. It is a theological anthropology where the human person became detached from the rest of creation —constantly seeking for a place of belonging in his/her body and on earth.

Chapter 4

The body in theology: exploring the corporeal turn

On a Tuesday afternoon in April 1993, a middle-aged man called Jim, climbed into his car in a neighbourhood in Minneapolis, Minnesota and drove to a local hotel a few kilometres away from his home. On the way to the hotel, he stopped at a liquor store and bought a few bottles of vodka, his drink of choice. He locked himself up in his hotel room and started drinking. He only had his first taste of liquor when he entered college as a young student, having been born into a teetotaling, middle class Presbyterian family in a small Midwestern town on 28 May 1930. He then stopped drinking alcohol for twenty years only to rediscover its tender oblivion in the sophisticated taste of claret, port and wine in the Senior Common Room of Oxford where he spent some time doing research. At this time, he had already published a few books on medical issues and medical care. He started drinking again in full force in his fifties, switching from drinking wine to hard liquor. His wife, Wilys Claire was well aware of the signs of his alcoholism, having spent some time in the chemical dependency unit at a local hospital where she worked as a hospital staff chaplain. His marriage was already under stress and he had some physical and emotional problems as a result of his drinking. Their children, Stephen and Mary were already grown-up and had left home. This time, in his hotel room in Minneapolis, he did not stop drinking. At some stage the vodka he bought at the liquor store ran out and he ordered more from room service at the hotel. He went on a drinking binge for five and a half days and on the evening of Monday, 19 April 1993 he ran out of alcohol. He phoned his wife and the following day they started to make arrangements for him to go for treatment at the Hazelden Centre. He phoned his dean to cancel his classes and other commitments for the rest of the month and on Wednesday, 21 April 1993 he was admitted to the centre and started their 31-day rehabilitation programme. When he left the centre, he participated for six months in the after-care group therapy sessions and after those ended, he regularly attended recovery meetings.

In 1992, the year before the incident described above, he published a book titled, *Body Theology*, in Louisville, Kentucky. This was a follow-up to his ground-breaking book, *Embodiment: an approach to sexuality and Christian theology*, which was published in 1978. The man was James B. Nelson, professor of Christian Ethics at the United Theological Seminary of Twin Cities, Minneapolis. He received his PhD at Yale University in the 1962

and did post-doctoral work at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In 1972 he was one of the first religious professionals to get involved in the Programme on Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota. Together with other colleagues, they developed a national model for seminary sexual education which included a component on LBGT (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender) individuals. In 1977 he published an article “Homosexuality and the Church” in *Christian and Crisis* magazine which moved him into the national spotlight (Igbtran 2005). He lectured at the seminary for most of his career and received an Honorary Doctorate from the seminary in 2012 (News from United 2012:2).

The process thus far has been to develop deeper and deeper levels of inquiry regarding the body and to develop a richer understanding of the body and experiences of the body within a concrete life world and in this case, the bodily experiences of people in southern Africa. I have traced the corporeal-linguistic turn in the twentieth century in various academic disciplines, listened to a variety of voices in the history of Christianity and what they say about the creation of humankind and the connection between body and soul. The question now is whether one can also refer to a corporeal turn within theology. How did the focus on the body in theology occur? How does body theology (from a reformed perspective) differ from a theology of the body (from a Roman Catholic perspective)? How does this focus on the body enrich our understanding of the body and how can it lead to a deeper level of inquiry within theological anthropology? The two major proponents of the body in theology during the twentieth century was James B. Nelson and Pope John Paul II, with important perspectives on the body given by the Roman Catholic theologian Benedict Ashley and the feminist theologians Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart.

4.1 Background to the theological work of James B. Nelson

Nelson relates the story of his alcohol abuse in his most recent book, *Thirst: God and the alcoholic experience* (2004). Finding the right moment to start writing took him many years. Even though some biographical material does appear in his previous books, it was interesting to see how he used his own experience of alcoholism in this book, being on the “inside”. He writes from an “insider perspective” for people who “want to use the lenses of theology (especially Christian theology) to look at their own addiction and recovery...who want to think ‘theologically’ about life and its important events...who know that their personal stories...are best understood as part of a larger faith story” (Nelson 2004:6). When he reads

the books on addiction by non-addicted professionals, he finds “things missing — nuances, feelings, pieces of the experience — stuff of common conversations among recovering addicts” (Nelson 2004:7). He considers autobiography as having the potential to be a theological statement and refers to John Barbour who writes that “at its [autobiography’s] heart lies *bios*. *Bios* in autobiography does not simply mean the temporal span of organic existence, but the ‘sense of life’ of an individual: all that gives meaning and purpose to a person’s experience in time” (Nelson 2004:15). Nelson positions his own story within the text of his theology and writes briefly that “Yes, I am an alcoholic. I am also a Protestant Christian, white, male, North American, of Scandinavian descent, military veteran, middle-class, married, parent, grandparent, retired seminary professor” (Nelson 2004:16). Interestingly enough, the theologians David H. Kelsey and Sally McFague make similar autobiographical statements in their theological work which I shall explore in a later chapter. Nelson views each of these autobiographical particularities as a “lens through which I see my story...and each of these shapes my story of God” and that is one reason why it is dangerous to generalise (Nelson 2004:17). As a theologian who follows a narrative approach in therapy, I am fascinated by Nelson’s use of the narrative in his theology. He writes that a narrative approach infuses theology with passion and argues that we need a theology that “creates connective tissues among us”, that reminds us of our vulnerabilities and struggles instead of a theology characterised by “coolness and detachment” (Nelson 2004:17).

Nelson considers “lived experience” (and in this book the lived experience of addiction and recovery) to be the most neglected in theology. For this reason oppression and poverty are considered to be one of the most essential aspects of God’s activity and a cardinal principle in liberation theology (Nelson 2004:11). He writes that economic hardships as well as the insights from marginalised groups like African Americans, white women, and LGBT persons have contributed to the formation of liberation theologies (Nelson 2004:12). He continues that for many, theology is a “second moment” and that the first moment is “life itself”, that “theology comes afterward, attempting to understand and serve life”. He maintains that there are no universal theologies, but only theologies as “attempts by believers to make sense of life’s challenges and to respond to them in faith” (Nelson 2004:12). He writes significantly that “theology as ‘second moment’ involves understanding our ‘first moment’ experience, as fully as we can” (Nelson 2004:13). Nelson (2004:12) writes that liberation theology reminds us that “all theologies are bound to specific histories and life experiences” and that theology

is, in its core, a social enterprise. It is not primarily an intellectual task of an individual person, but an authentic “outgrowth of life in community”.

Additional sources for his insider theological perspective in this book include the theological insights from Scripture and tradition, which he views as insights “about God in the human experience”; the contemporary wisdom from “novelists, playwrights and poets”; disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology; and medical theory and practice (Nelson 2004:11). He writes that in the theologies of Western Europe, philosophy has been the preferred partner of conversation, with social sciences being the partner of liberation theologies of Latin America; he states that with this book on addiction and recovery, he chooses social and medical sciences as his research partners. These are also the conversation partners he engaged with in his earlier books on embodiment and body theology. He continues that with regard to interdisciplinary research, “we should cast our nets as widely as possible when we are fishing for insights”. Curiously, he does not mention “body theology” in itself as a source, although he does look at the functioning of alcoholism as a disease of the body. In his earlier work, albeit not in great detail, he refers to liberation theology as a source for body theology, “as the appropriate place for understanding and interpreting the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ”, which takes the human political struggle for liberation seriously (Nelson 1978:15).

Nelson continues to draw an analogue with sexual theology as “an all-encompassing approach” in theology and an approach “to grapple with the meaning of God’s purposes, presence, and action for our lives at this particular time and place in history”. He writes that his theological education took place in the 1950s when “Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth were standard theological fare”; he believed then that life was made up of simple opposites like good and bad, right and wrong, true and false (Nelson 2004:18). Paradox has, however, shaped his Christian faith and life and that is also why in his most recent book he refers to his theological work as a paradoxical theology. He continues that even though a “reconstructed liberalism” shaped his theology and is part of him, he believes that the gospel can only be understood paradoxically. He considers “the absurd — which can be expressed only in paradox” to be the road to faith, following in the footsteps of Kierkegaard who “taught us that when thought is driven to its limits, when we attempt to discover what thoughts finally cannot rationally comprehend, we are left with the absurd” (Nelson 2004:18). He also regards *desire* as the heart of spirituality, a desire which is expressed in the hunger for wholeness, a

yearning for completion, and a craving for certainty (Nelson 2004:23). He writes that this desire can also be experienced as a thirst and then makes the drastic statement that “since spirit is neither ethereal nor disembodied, both God and alcohol can be sensuous *and* spiritual experiences” (Nelson 2004:25). He continues to describe spirituality as always being “a matter of the total self — the body and its desires included”, an experience that both Protestants and Roman Catholics have been very ambivalent about in their pieties since desire seemed to be so bodily, visceral and sexual that it could not possibly be part of a true spirituality. From as early as 1978, Nelson wrote that “desire as an expression of the body-self is an intrinsic element in our openness to God...to desire can mean to know, and to know can mean to love” (Nelson 1978:33).

In 1978 he wrote about “embodiment in sexual theology”, but also emphatically stated that “sexual theology is body theology” (Nelson 1978:20). He considered liberation theology as a source of sexual theology/body theology, which is indicative, at the time of writing the book, of the era of sexual and political liberation between the 1960s and the 1980s, and his personal involvement in the cause of LGBT persons. He does not refer to liberation theology again in his book, *Body theology* (1992), but focuses more on the use of social constructionism in his work, “particularly as shaped by symbolic interactionists” (Nelson 1992:48). He also views body theology as an “Incarnational body theology”, as attempts “to reflect on body experience as revelatory of God” (Nelson 1992:50). His emphasis on liberation theology in his most recent (and probably last book) is a fascinating loop back to the start of his seminal work in 1978, and gives the impression that he is sidelining the core contribution of his own work on body theology. Perhaps this has to do with the sense of liberation he experienced in overcoming his addiction, and the struggle during his continued recovery. Liberation theology is probably a closer fit to his life experiences from 1993 onwards. It could also be that his life’s work is centred more on sexual ethics and that his body theology did not find a comfortable home.

4.1.1 The body theology of James B. Nelson

In 1978 James Nelson wrote his seminal work, *Embodiment: an approach to sexuality and Christian theology*, in an effort to broaden the scope of traditional sexual ethics which he describes as having a “too-narrow focus”, and which is no longer effective (Nelson 1978:9). At the start of the book he writes that “Christian faith ought to take embodiment seriously”,

and refers to John 1:14, which is a description of “the embodiment of God in Jesus Christ”, writing that the incarnation is not merely a past event, but that “the Word *still* becomes flesh” (Nelson 1978:8). As mentioned before, he equates sexual theology with body theology in this book, but it was only 14 years later that he wrote his book, *Body Theology* (1992). Nelson reveals more of his sources for body theology in his 1992 book, with various case studies and a focus on biomedical issues in Christian ethics. The deeper theoretical framework for his sexual theology/body theology, however, was laid out in his 1978 book, which carries many of the seeds for his thoughts on body theology, to be explored in the following section.

4.1.2 Embodiment in Christian theology

Embodiment: an approach to sexuality and Christian theology (1978) is divided into ten chapters: the church and sexuality; embodiment in sexual theology; sexual alienation (the dualistic nemesis); sexual salvation (grace and the resurrection of the body); love and sexual ethics; the meanings of marriage and fidelity; the morality of sexual variations; gayness and homosexuality; the sexually disenfranchised, and the church as sexual community. Nelson (1978:32) makes use of the term “body-selves” to denote the integration between the body and the soul, the body not being an object outside or apart from how the individual experiences the self as a person. It refers to the unity of the person and resists the split between mind and body and the location of the experience of self in only a part of the self. The question for him is not simply what theology has to say about the body (as this would then be a theme for moral theology or Christian ethics), but about what it means that we as body-selves participate in the reality of God and how we, as body-selves reflect about that reality. What we do, and the relationships we are in, forms the material of theology, and these are intimately intertwined with our sexuality. He once again stresses the importance of the body, writing that “doing sexual theology is different from applying theology to sexual issues” (Nelson 2010:xvi). He continues that it is not possible any longer to maintain that “faith has received its truth quite independently of our body experience” or believe that “spirituality is a disembodied state”.

Nelson (1978:42) quotes the Anglican priest and theologian, John Fenton when he writes that non-bodily theologies are anti-self, anti-neighbour, anti-society, and anti-world. He says this in the context of the age-old dualism that sees the spirit as free and immortal, while the body is mortal and corrupt. This body alienation takes place when the mind is alienated from the

body and the body from the mind. The body merely becomes a physical object which belongs to the self and could be used by the self. This leads to a dichotomised thinking, a self-looking that searches for simple reasons for things, a mind thinking in terms of, for example, black/white, male/female, good/bad, right/wrong, and heterosexual/homosexual. When the body is an expression of the self, Nelson (1978:38) sees it as alive, vibrant and charged with feeling. Where this awareness of feeling and bodily attitudes is absent, a person is torn between a “disembodied spirit and a disenchanted body”. He makes the statement that when persons reject their bodies, they become uncomfortable talking about themselves as body-selves. The body is treated as a thing, a dangerous force, and the mind has the duty to discipline and control the body. Nelson (1978:40) writes that there is a clear connection between body alienation and promiscuity, leading to a compulsive sexuality devoid of affection and not discriminating in the way the body pursues its pleasure. Alienation is the root experience of sin, which translates into alienation from the self, an alienation from the neighbour, and, most profoundly, alienation from God.

Nelson (1978:66) makes a crucial reference to the male psychology of dominance and control. He writes that “in the typically masculine value system talking is valued over listening, competition and conflict over incremental growth, self-confidence over humility, decisiveness over thoughtfulness, charisma and dynamism over long-term credibility, an aggressive approach over a persuasive one...and this combined with the fear of emotion, makes interpersonal intimacy difficult for large numbers of men....a certain code of masculinity is purchased at a price of suppressing tenderness and self-acceptance”. These patterns are building blocks for social violence. Men are socially and culturally conditioned to base their self-respect on sexual potency and conquest and to fear homosexuality. This conditioning is also strongly genital-centred; emphasis is on the size of the penis. According to Nelson (1978:67), this genitalisation of male sexuality leads to a loss of whole-body sensitivity. The boundaries of the body must be defended. This limits the capacity for psychic intimacy, and the result is psychic celibacy which he describes as “the tendency to keep women emotionally and mentally at arm’s length, even when there is genital sex expression”. Male sexism takes a painful toll on women, but most definitely also on men. It is, however, a “no” spoken to God, since it violates the divinely-created equality of persons.

Nelson (1978:78) translates justification by grace as God’s radical, unconditional and unearned acceptance of us. He refers to the sermon of Paul Tillich, “You are accepted” – an

expression of God's acceptance that strikes us when we are disgusted with our own being, by our indifference, our weakness, and our hostility:

You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. *Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!* If that happens to us, we experience grace.

This means that God's acceptance is directed at the whole person, the total sexual self. Nelson then continues to elaborate on Tillich's words, writing: "You are accepted, the total you. Your body, which you often reject, is accepted by that which is greater than you. Your sexual feelings and unfulfilled yearnings are accepted. You are accepted in your ascetic attempts at self-justification or in your hedonistic alienation from the true meaning of your sexuality. You are accepted in those moments of sexual fantasy which comes unbidden and which both delight and disturb you. You are accepted in your femininity and your masculinity, for you have elements of both. You are accepted in your heterosexuality and in your homosexuality, and you have elements of both. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted as a sexual person. If that happens to you, you experience grace." Nelson (1978:80) discusses the dynamics of self-rejection and self-acceptance in the growth towards greater wholeness. This correlates strongly with the psychodynamics of shame and guilt. He asks the question: What will happen if these emotions of shame and guilt are directed against our own bodies and our sexuality, especially if it is experienced with any kind of sexual desire? This constitutes a rejection of the body-self as a result of indirect self-hate, and this is a rejection of who we actually are "in emotional health and neurosis, in wholeness and estrangement, in grace and sin". Nelson (1978:82) quotes Lowen, who describes the results of self-rejection as loss of feeling of identity, a reduced awareness of individuality, a decrease in self-expression, and a diminished capacity for pleasure. He continues to make the profound link between self-acceptance and humility, seeing humility as a basic acceptance of the body-self:

Authentic humility is not self-depreciation. It is self-appreciation founded upon the experiential conviction of divine acceptance. It is the security of self that does not compulsively demand narcissistic support and constant affirmation of others. In contrast, self-rejection feeds upon illusions about the self's competence and virtue, often manifesting a need to be universally loved and admired. But such illusions mask a curious combination of arrogance and self-hate, pretence and anger.

Self-acceptance then personalises the body. According to Nelson (1978:83), the body's personalisation expresses itself in the mind with its intimate link to emotions, creating a deep awareness of what influences feelings. The body can act and feel with a "spontaneous aliveness"; with this self-acceptance comes the deep sense that I am the body which I live. It creates the awareness that I have a real self, able to relate to others, and that we are "unique selves interested in communication and communion, not in conquest or dependency" (Nelson, 1978:84). Commenting on Song of Songs, Nelson (1978:85) sees in it an absence of male domination and female subordination — strongly present is mutuality and co-humanity. It is a "portrait of sensuousness", in contrast with the view of many earlier theologians, who saw sexual desire as an expression of lust, and therefore sinful. According to this view, any celebration of sensuality would be considered as sensual hedonism, devoid of love, depersonalising sex, which implies that pleasure is sought only for the sake of pleasure. Even impersonal sex, for Nelson (1978:86), is not just an expression of animalistic sexuality. Even then it is "desperate lunges, by an ego already torn apart under the pressure of various conflicts, at re-establishing some emotional links with the world". An affirmation of sensuality does not hint at impersonal sexual hedonism, but speaks of a Creator who designed a self with an erotic dynamism aimed at personal sexual communion, a body infused with grace. When the body-self experiences pleasure, Nelson (1978:87) is of the opinion that these are not merely some feel-good emotions, but the "union of bodily, emotional, mental, and spiritual feelings, in ways that the person experiences markedly positive sensations about the self". Self-abandonment takes place at the height of ecstasy, with the body-self feeling deeply unified, "taken out of itself into another, yet intensely itself". Nelson (1978:88) writes that there is a dialectical relationship between commitment and pleasure, where pleasure is experienced with the complete commitment of body and mind. This commitment is a dimension of love, with the amount of pleasure directly proportional to the amount of feeling and commitment invested in a relationship. He continues that "love is the promise that the pleasure of today will also be tomorrow's".

Nelson (1978:90), very importantly, touches on play being integrally related to pleasure as a form of sensuousness. Men especially, can find it difficult to play in a society focussed on the masculine image with a strong need to control, combined with a rational work ethic. He quotes Sidney Callahan who wrote that play is closely related to culture, contemplation, wholeness (through human sexuality), and a healthy balance. Playfulness requires the devaluation of control as the main activity. Play is egalitarian and depends on cooperation,

openness and freedom. This implies that in order to play, one must learn to trust that the environment will not inure one; it means that one has the ability to relax long enough to enjoy one's own vulnerability. He writes that "faith affirms that the capacity for such sexual play arises from grace. I am open to trust and spontaneity, to surrender and to the involuntary, only as I am able to trust my beloved and my own body-self. But the ability to trust is not an achievement. It is a gift". Nelson (1978:92) pleads for a "resexualization of the entire body" away from a genital tyranny in relationships, where sexuality is not a separate compartment of life. This could even translate to an openness to each other's thoughts, "a form of communion which can be as sexually charged as physical contact"; it can be more intimate than physical nakedness. He correlates the ability to accept my acceptance, that is, to experience my body-self as one, with the extent to which my sexual awareness expands beyond a narrow genital focus. Concluding his chapter on sexual salvation, Nelson (1978:103) writes:

Our salvation — including our sexual salvation — is incompletely realized. Yet it is real. Because we are not yet whole, the unhealed parts of our sexuality will continue to hurt us and others. But the first and the last word of the gospel is grace; grace as forgiveness and acceptance, grace as growth toward fulfilment and empowerment for new life. The Word is made flesh and our flesh is confirmed.

Nelson (1978:109) sees love as the relationship of reunion with God, the neighbour and the self and quotes Paul Tillich who said that love is the moving power of life, which drives everything that is, towards the unity of the separated. Life has love as one of its constitutive elements. Often, theologians used the sharp distinction between agape (a freely offered self-giving) and eros when attempting to speak about love, but as Nelson (1978:110) points out, this prevents emotions, desires and sexual feelings from being integrated into a Christian understanding of selfhood; this sharp distinction forms the basis of a certain manner in which our sexuality informs all our loving, unappreciated and unclarified, thus playing yet again into alienating sexual dualisms. A definition of love can reflect more of healing than alienation, celebrating polarity without dichotomy.

Nelson (1978:112) sees it as follows: "I believe, in addition to our humanly-directed expressions of epithymia and eros, we can justly speak — and we need to speak — of the erotic and sexual dimensions of our love for God. For, if sex without eros loses meaning and direction, it is also true that eros without epithymia loses its passion and power. And a love

for God devoid of passion and power does little to gladden either the human or the divine heart.” For Nelson (1978:110), *epithymia* denotes the desire for sexual fulfilment, and *eros* the aspiration and desire for the beloved. Both sexual desire and *eros* need *philia* — mutuality and friendship. Nelson (1978:113) states that the other elements of love without *agape* are self-destructive in the end. If *agape* is present with sexual desire, erotic aspirations and mutuality, it transforms the other elements from being self-centred and possessive into a relationship “that is humanly enriching and creative”. Nelson (1978:114) refers to Gene Outka, who wrote that often self-love is seen as individualistic and only concerned with its own welfare, or can only be justified if and when it stems from concern for others. Otherwise self-love is seen as indivisible of other-love.

Nelson (1978:115), however, writes that these interpretations say too little about sexuality. He writes that love is indivisible and non-quantifiable, that “authentic self-love is not a matter of being curved inward upon the self. It is not narcissism, nor is it a grasping selfishness. It is self-acceptance and affirmation of one’s own graciously-given worth and creaturely fineness (in spite of all distortions and flaws)”. Self-love is for him basic to personal fulfilment; the opposite, tragically is that those who have rejected their bodies, who cannot accept the goodness of their sexuality, experience great difficulty to respond sexually to another. Self-denial is very unattractive, since it erodes intimacy and undermines love. Ironically, Nelson (1978:116) maintains that there is a selflessness that emerges when a person discovers his or her own identity in a self-fulfilling way. He quotes Dorothee Sölle who wrote that it is a partial renunciation freely given for the sake of another’s fulfilment and that the stronger a person’s self-identity, the greater the ability for true renunciation. He further writes that intimacy is always threatening to the person who lacks self-affirmation. Without self-love, we tend to depend on social roles to guide us and in the end, only see ourselves as projected in the expectations of others.

Love is an essential gift in Christian faith. Nelson (1978:118) sees some values and characteristics of love, which can serve as ethical criteria for specific sexual acts. Love is then self-liberating, a sign of your own selfhood and opening the potential to grow; it is other-enriching, focussing on the well-being of the partner; it is honest, expressing truthfully the relationship that exists; it is faithful, expanding the uniqueness of the relationship without being possessive; it is social responsible, “nurturing the fabric of the larger community to which the lovers belong”; it is life-serving, transmitting the energy of life from one person to

another, sometimes even to procreate and then it is joyous, appreciating the mystery of love and the gift of life. Love is open to life. Nelson (1978:129) then defines “life” as being “centered in that human wholeness embodied in the One who came that we might live, and have it more abundantly”.

There is a slight datedness in the title of Nelson’s chapter on Gayness and Homosexuality: Issues for the Church. One must keep in mind that this chapter was written in 1978, a few years after the Stonewall Riots, a spontaneous uprising of the gay community against police raids on gay clubs. The Stonewall Riots became symbolic of the gay struggle for equal rights. In the introduction to this chapter, Nelson (1978:181) writes that the church must re-examine its theological stance because the insights from gay Christians and feminist theologians have shown that there are a variety of ways in which our specific sexual conditioning has influenced our perception of God’s nature and how God is present among us. The predominantly heterosexual-orientated majority in the Church can also enrich their capacity to “love other human beings fully and less fearfully, and is a more faithful response to God’s will for social justice”. Nelson (1978:188) examines various biblical texts pertaining to homosexuality, and writes:

The central message regarding sexuality seems clear enough. Like every good gift, it can be misused. The idolatrous dishonoring of God inevitably results in the dishonoring of persons, and faithfulness to God will result in sexual expression which honors the personhood of the other. Our sexuality is not a mysterious and alien force of nature but part of what it means to be human. It is a power to be integrated fully into one’s selfhood and to be used in the service of love. That message, I am convinced, applies regardless of one’s affectional orientation.

Nelson (1978:188) identifies four theological stances towards homosexuality: the rejecting-punitive attitude rejects homosexuality unconditionally as a legitimate Christian attitude, and is characterised by a punitive attitude taken towards gay persons; the rejecting-nonpunitive attitude (with Karl Barth as one of its exponents) condemns homosexuality and believes that as a result of grace, the gay person must be accepted. The third attitude is one of qualified acceptance. Here, Nelson (1978:196) sites Helmut Thielicke as the best example of this stance. Where possible, a gay person must actively seek to change their sexual orientation, but when not possible, these persons have to sublimate their sexual desires and not act on them. It basically says to the gay person that “if you really must give genital expression to

your orientation you must do it in a morally responsible way — but do not forget that you are a sinner because of your sexual orientation and do not deny that you are a sexual pervert”. The fourth theological possibility is that of full acceptance. Nelson (1978:197) writes that here the assumption is made that homosexuality is more a given than a matter of free choice and that “same-sex relationships can richly express and be the vehicle of God’s humanizing intentions”. Here Nelson (1978:199) quotes Norman Pittenger who wrote that the physiological and psychological base for our capacity to love is our embodied sexuality and that abnormality must not be measured statistically, but by the norm of humanity in Jesus Christ. He pleads for an ethic of sexual love for heterosexual and gay persons equally, without any double standards. Nelson (1978:200) writes that gay persons, like anyone else, are looking for meaning and wholeness in and through their sexuality, which is intrinsic to their capacity for any kind of human love.

Many of our perceptions of faith and its moral values are formed by our perceptions as sexual persons. This is definitely true in anti-gay stereotyping, where, for example many people feel repugnant about physical acts used by gay persons to express themselves sexually. Heterosexuals do not often define themselves as strongly in terms of their sexual orientation and feel uncomfortable about the central space it occupies in the sexual identity of gays. Unfortunately, there is also a preoccupation with the narrow sexual aspect of a gay person’s life, even though gays express their commitment and the degree to which it becomes an organising principle in their lives, in deeply varied ways. Nelson (1978:202) writes that anti-gay feelings can be greatly influenced by patriarchal or sexual dualism. There is the possibility of anxiety about homosexual feelings in the heterosexual person. This anxiety is often felt more strongly by men where a male is expected to feel masculine and where homosexuality “threatens masculine gender identity...because it is felt as the potential eradication of safe limits and borders within whose confines we can rest easy and sure of what and who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to feel”.

Referring to pollution rituals studied by anthropologists, Nelson (1978:203) writes that in ancient and modern societies the marginal person may be doing nothing wrong morally, but somehow has crossed the pattern of society and symbols of order. Their status is indefinable and this places them in the wrong. Because of their sexual orientation, it appears as if gay persons deviate from commonly-held values of marriage, family and children, and because they are judged by the “own standards”, it makes them deviant. Nelson (1978:205) sees civil

rights as a basic Christian commitment to social justice for all persons. Finally it is a theological matter, where through the grace of God some healing can be experienced for sexual dualisms, where it would not be necessary to project our own alienation on others and where there will be liberation from a strong hierarchical and power-conscious attitude toward life. It will be a liberation “into greater equality, more sensitive abilities to care about persons, augment justice, in short, a freedom to love more fully — others and also ourselves”.

Nelson (1978:211) pertinently writes about the sexually disenfranchised groups of people often treated as nonsexual. He writes about the physically disabled, the seriously ill, the aging and the mentally retarded and illustrates that our sexuality is not only about a biological capacity, but very much about finding or making meaning. Nelson (1978:212) writes that the words used to describe disabled people, for example deformed, crippled or paralysed also carry the suggestion that these people are incapable of sexual expression or totally disinterested. This strengthens the myth that disabled people are nonsexual persons or maintains the irrational fear that the children of disabled people will also be disabled. The darker side of this myth is the belief that the disabled have excessive and perverted sexual needs. This myth is being fed by a double distortion that our sexuality is incidental to a human being, not comprehending that to deny someone’s sexuality, to desex a person, is deeply dehumanising. The other side of this distortion is the perception that sexuality has mainly a genital focus and therefore, when someone is incapable of genital experience, the person is nonsexual. Often these myths are internalised by the disabled, resulting in a struggle for self-acceptance and a searching for a legitimate way to express their sexuality in a hostile environment. Nelson (1978:215) writes that these feelings of helplessness and insecurity are further compounded in the effort to gain meaningful occupations in the labour market.

Fantasy plays a large role in dealing with sexual problems. Nelson (1978:213) notes that sexual desire does not depend on the presence of actual physical sensation and feels that physically disabled persons, with the “orgasm of the mind” which is independent of the body, are a testimony of the human-body unity. Nelson (1978:215) writes that even severely disabled people experience themselves still as male or female, masculine and feminine; they have the sexual capacity to give and receive love. According to Nelson (1978:216) the theological implications are obvious: sexuality is integral to our personhood and when this is denied to others, it is a denial of that person’s full humanity. When this aspect is rediscovered, there is an experience of the miracle of grace:

The story has been repeated time and again in lives of the disabled — from defeat, self-condemnation, withdrawal, and alienation to self-acceptance, new engagement with life, hope and a new capacity to express care and love. That is one expression of the mysterious and gracious power of God at work in and through human relationships. (Nelson 1978:216)

Nelson (1978:236) describes the church as a sexual community, having always been concerned with the sexuality of its members in creative and destructive ways, and with its liturgy and doctrines

shaped by the sexual perceptions of its members. He calls for a resexualisation of the church's theology, through a new awareness of how our sexuality has shaped our expressions of faith. This entails the deconstruction of sexual and spiritual dualism, also through the use of an inclusive language. The paradox according to Nelson (1978:238) is that of divine transcendence and divine immanence. God transcends human sexuality and therefore the image of a masculine God is inadequate. At the same time God is immanent and that's why a spiritual dualism that does not make provision for the divine presence in an embodied existence, is still inadequate. "If God is male, then male is God", and this is an obstacle in "the development of richly androgynous humanity in people of both sexes". Nelson (1978:239) writes that the paradox is further intensified by biblical writers. God transcends human sexuality and yet, is experienced through our sexuality. We do not leave our sexuality behind in the encounter with the divine. Nelson refers to the feminine dimensions of God, in the imagery of Yahweh in the Old Testament (a woman's work in providing food and water in the desert; making garments; described as a seamstress; having birth pangs; a nursing mother; being compared to a midwife), as well as the Mariology in the Medieval Church.

Importantly, Nelson (1978:246) sees the affirmation of human sexuality as essential to a positive doctrine of the *Imago Dei*, the image of God in humankind. He regards the insistence on human bodiliness as an affirmation of human transcendence: "my body is my being-in-the-world". The image of God has often been distorted in Christian tradition where the fullness of the image of God was only associated with males and evil was identified with women. He quotes Margaret Farley who wrote that masculinity has been connoted to strength in relation to feminine weakness, activity in opposition to passivity, and autonomy in relation to dependence. Nelson (1978:248) writes "that the move to find sexual identity as incarnational is a move towards radical human equality which itself is inherent in an adequate

understanding of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*". In his latest book, he writes that the image of God in persons can never be destroyed since it is not something humans possess, but a relational reality which he describes as "our connectedness to God" (Nelson 2004:33).

Nelson developed his body theology from the perspective of Christian ethics and not as a systematic theologian. His interpretation of the Incarnation and the *Imago Dei* reflects his academic background and the influence of the sexual revolution at the time of writing this book.

Writing about the sexual dimensions of the Church's communal life, Nelson (1978:258) writes that the church needs both the metaphors of the body of Christ and the covenant, since both indicate one community. Both metaphors hold an organic image, which points to a body theology. The church as sexual community is both the organic Body of Christ and covenanted People of God. This means that the Church is crucial in making love a reality in human life. He writes that the capacity to abandon oneself to such a community is linked with our sexuality. The qualities of the body are that of spontaneity, pleasure and feeling and therefore the Body of Christ is opposed to any spiritualistic dualism. "It is not a community of discarnate spirits but of body-selves bound to each other in and through their incarnate Lord."

In the same direction, Sigurdson (2008:27) quotes Gail Weiss who said that "the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other humans and nonhuman bodies". For Christianity, the individual body is intimately connected with the body of Christ. Sigurdson writes: "Your own body does not stop at its finger-tops but extends into other bodies that let it share in a not only 'intersubjective' community, but a community that is 'intercorporeal' as well." Sigurdson (2008:28) continues that Christianity "lost its sight of the body" when the relationship between God and humans were reduced to "an affair between God and the soul", with the social body becoming a "colourless sociological or juridical concept".

The church as "body" is then also in opposition to sexist dualism. Nelson sees it as a therapeutic community that enables women to deal with alienation; a supportive community against isolation; and a healing community where members can find strength in each other. It is a community "composed of free and unique historical beings, never uniform, never swallowing one another up in group imperialism". These metaphors speak of intimacy and

mutuality and have implications for the diversity of sexual patterns in a congregation. Nelson (1978:260) writes that “different sexual life-styles being lived out with integrity and in Christian humanizing ways need not simply be tolerated — they can positively be supported. The ‘family of God’ can ill afford to make a nuclear family its sole model. Single persons and couples, heterosexual and homosexual in orientation, celibates and those covenanted together can all compose a rich fabric of Christian community”.

Nelson (1978:261) is of the opinion that when sexuality gets trivialised, one fails to recognise the “intricate, subtle, and far-reaching ways in which it permeates current social issues”. The irony is that these issues of three decades ago are still so relevant and are still pleading for “significant alleviation of their injustices”. Nelson (1978:263) writes that a holistic vision of sexuality can lead the church to see more clearly and respond more effectively to important sexual dimensions in vast social issues, for example social violence, racism, and ecology.

Social violence: he sees the sexist dualism — man over woman as a potent root of sexual violence since males in many societies learn an adversary and dominant style of relating to humans. Cultural values are based on the “machismo” image of masculinity with a fear of homosexuality, a cult of toughness and a demand for potency. There is no persuasive scientific evidence that aggressiveness and violence are per se biologically more characteristic of males and causes could rather be sought in social values and patterns of socialisation. It is on these values and patterns that the church has an impact. Nelson (1978:265) maintains that a spiritualistic, anti-sex dualism with a link between deprivation of physical pleasure and tendencies towards physical violence, also contributes to social violence. He refers to a cross-cultural study which found an extremely high correlation between violence, deprivation of bodily pleasure during infancy and adolescence, and the amount of warfare and interpersonal violence. The opposite was also revealed: positive attitudes towards the body and sexuality correlating with a minimal orientation to violence. Can this be linked to the high levels of social violence and crime in South African society?

Nelson (1978:266) also sees an interweaving of sexual elements in *racism*. In the American race problem, the white woman was the symbol of purity and delicacy while the black woman was represented with an animality that could be exploited for sex and labour. The black male was the sexual beast and white women were to be protected from him by the white man’s terrorism. Here Nelson refers to Eldridge Cleaver who said that only when the

white man comes to respect his own body will he be able to accept the black man's mind and body, and treat him as something other than the living symbol of what he has rejected in himself. Nelson (1978: 267) maintains that the psychological hypothesis of bodily scapegoating is very prominent in white-black relationships. The white person projects his dirty and disgusted body feelings on the black person. Studies have shown that those who are overly concerned about dirt and their own feelings of uncleanness are most likely to view black people negatively. The greatest dehumanising takes place when a person of a rejected body group internalises these judgments and is convinced of an own bodily inferiority. Nelson (1978:268) acknowledges that racism, like violence is a complex phenomenon with historical, economic and political dimensions; sexual elements are present and are important.

Sexist and spiritualistic dualisms are closely intertwined in social attitudes towards *nature and ecology*. Nelson (1978:269) writes that under Christianity, nature became a neutral, value-free realm to be manipulated according to human design. The woman, the body and the world were the lower half of the dualism that must be subject to the ultimately alien nature of male consciousness, in whose image man made his God. He continues:

The vision of dominion over the earth became domination with the earth's resources free to be exploited. Perhaps it is an oversimplification, but the present ecological crisis cannot be isolated from sexist dualisms. St. Francis used a language of kinship with the earth, "Brother Cloud and Sister Moon", but currently we use the language of sexual violence, rape to describe the human abuse of the earth. The affirmation of the body is positively correlated with a sense of belonging to, and caring for the earth. Nature is not merely a thing to be used, but nature and earth are part of each other in "reciprocity, giving and receiving.

4.1.3 On doing body theology

Body Theology (1992) is divided into four parts:

- Body theology and human sexuality;
- Some male issues in body theology;
- Some medical issues for body theology; and
- Sermonic conclusions.

Part one is about sexuality and spirituality where Nelson affirms his commitment to a continuing sexual revolution, building on the ideas in his 1978 book. He also repeats many of

the ideas developed in 1978 in Chapter 3: “Doing Body Theology”, and uses homosexuality as a test case to illustrate the sources for body theology in Chapter 4. Here Nelson (1992:58) employs the “quadrilateral formula” of the theologian John Wesley in his methodology, which gives central position to the Scripture, but which always should be interpreted through “the Spirit, with the indispensable aid of the church’s tradition (which checks our own interpretation against the richness of past witnesses), reason (which guards against narrow and arbitrary interpretations), and experience (which is personal, inward, and enables us to interpret and appropriate the gospel)”. Part two covers aging in men as a case study, the emotional experiences of men, and a chapter on men as pastors and councillors. Part three builds on biomedical issues which were his field of speciality within Christian ethics before he developed sexual theology/body theology. In this section, he focuses on medical care, reproductive choices, embryos and ethics and illness as body interpretation (HIV and AIDS). He concludes in part four with two sermons: a sermon for lesbian and gay awareness week at United Theological Seminary and a Holy Week sermon at the same seminary.

An important emphasis in his second book on body theology is Nelson’s affirmation in the first chapter for a continuing sexual revolution. In the very first paragraph he writes that “many people believe that the ‘sexual revolution’ of recent decades is over. Some breath sighs of relief. Others have regrets. But most agree: it is over. I hope — and I believe — they are wrong” (Nelson 1992:15). He acknowledges that the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s had many superficial expressions (for example the followers of the ideas of Wilhelm Reich who maintained that orgasms were the solution for everything), but it also brought many crucial changes (Nelson 1992:24). He writes this book in the wake of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and refers to the loud voices calling for a return to “traditional family values”. He bases his hope for a continuing sexual revolution on the backlash that has jeopardised gains made for the sexually oppressed, which he identifies as “women, gay men and lesbians, single persons, the aging, persons with disabilities, persons of color” (Nelson 1992:15). He points out a variety of sexual issues that needs urgent attention, issues like death and sexuality fears in reaction to HIV/AIDS; theologies based on sexual dualisms; the ordination of church members in spite of their sexual orientation; openness to the pluralism of marital and family styles; the sexuality of single persons; a healthy erotic sexuality versus the pornography industry which oppresses women and children; teenage pregnancies; sexual abuse and sexual violence; the sexual problems of the clergy; the distortion of male sexuality

and the distance between what the church teaches and the sexual practice of its members (Nelson 1992:16-18).

He asserts that “organized religion has been, and in some ways still is, the major institution of ideological legitimisation for sexual oppression in Western culture” (Nelson 1992:16). Churches tend to shy away from engaging deeply with sexuality since they view it as distracting from “the life of the spirit” or because these sexuality issues are perceived as a threat to “entrenched male power” (Nelson 1992:19). The challenge to the church and synagogue is to terminate “the sexual hegemony of the nuclear family and the resulting temptation to police the sexuality of everyone who does not fit that mould”, because by doing so a relatively historical social structure has been elevated as the ultimate norm and a sexual model has been enforced that has marginalised and excluded many people (Nelson 1992:26).

He continues to point out the interrelatedness between heterosexism and homophobia and argues that many of the social problems have a deep link to sexual dualisms “that split spirit from body and establish patriarchy”. He pleads for a sexual theology from which an ethic will emerge “whose principles apply equally and without double standards to persons of both genders, of all colors, ages, bodily conditions, and sexual orientations” (Nelson 1992:21). He continues that such an ethic will be based on respect for bodily integrity and will defend any violation of that integrity. He repeats the ideas of his book written in 1978, writing that a viable sexual theology will affirm sexuality as more than genital expression; as intrinsic to the divine-human connection; as an expression of our destiny for freedom, creativity, vulnerability and joy and will be based on “commitments to equality, justice and fulfilment” (Nelson 1992:22). He continues that the ethic flowing from such a sexual theology will use “love” as a standard, a love with the dimensions of sexual desire (*epithymia*), the hunger for fulfilment (*eros*); friendship (*philia*) and self-giving (*agape*). He strikingly writes that “if we do not know the gospel of God in our bodies, we may never know it”, whereby he wants to affirm “the basic goodness of all human sexuality and our shared embodiedness” (Nelson 1992:23).

Nelson (1992:26) wants to remind Protestant Christians that their “spiritual forebears” understood that the main reason for the creation of humans as sexual beings was “to give us the desire and capacity to love and to bond with others in intimacy” and not primarily to bear children. He refers to the Roman Catholic priest and moral theologian, Charles Curran who

writes that moral theologians working in the area of sexual ethics are at the forefront at confronting real ecclesiological issues, since sexuality is such a significant aspect of life and “whenever sexuality and authority meet, a volatile situation is bound to result” (Nelson 1992:27). He continues that it is also true because of the desire of the church to control others, the fear of sexuality by its celibates, the patriarchal character of the church, also in its teachings on sexuality and the infallibility of its teachings which makes it absolute.

Another major contribution in his second book, *Body Theology* (1992), is Nelson’s insistence “that theology deals more seriously with actual human sexual experience” based on the Wesleyan heritage where reason and experience are viewed as sources of revelation together with scripture and tradition (Nelson 1992:21). He continues to refer to the stories of women as well as gay and lesbian persons, aging and disabled people who feel marginalised by society and the church and writes that in following liberation theologies, we need to ask “what does our experience as human sexual beings tell us about how we read the scripture, interpret tradition, and attempt to live out the meaning of the gospel?”. He views it as a movement in both directions. He continues this discussion on the importance of experience in Chapter 3: *Doing Body Theology* and acknowledges that the feminist and lesbian/gay movements have stressed the point that body experiences should be treated as important theological data (Nelson 1992:42). He continues that the body is an active source of meaning and that “the body has its own ways of knowing. The body often speaks its mind”. He makes the crucial observation that the “body-subject” as “the embodiment of consciousness, our bodily sense of how we are in the world” is the primary concern and not the “body-object” (Nelson 1992:42). He continues that “our concern is the interaction of the ‘givenness’ of our fleshy realities and the ways in which we interpret them. It is our bodily sense of connections to the world, our bodily sense of the space and time we are in, our bodily knowing of the meanings of our relationships”.

He then repeats the assertion in his 1978 book that “body theology begins with the concrete” and not with doctrines or creeds or problems in tradition. It begins with the concrete and “the fleshly experience of life — with our hungers and our passions, our bodily aliveness and deadness...with the bodyself making love with the beloved and lovemaking with the earth”, even though these bodily experiences are filtered through “an interpretive web of meanings” (Nelson 1992:43). He then sees the task of body theology as the “critical reflection on our bodily experience as a fundamental realm of the experience of God” and not a description of

life in our bodies from a “supra-bodily vantage point”. The body is ethically and theologically relevant in a variety of ways. Nelson (1992:45) repeats the statement in his earlier work that “our bodily experience is always sexual”, not in terms of genital activity, but where sexuality is seen as “our way of being in the world as bodyselves who are gendered biologically and socially”. He continues that our bodily experiences influence the way in which we interpret social relations, communities and other ethical institutions and in the same way it colours our basic theological perspectives — “our experience of God are inevitably connected to our lifelong body experience”. Nelson follows a social constructionism approach in his body theology as formed by symbolic interactionists and at the same time endeavours to recognise the claims of essentialists (Nelson 1992:48). He continues that while understanding that meanings are shaped by history, contexts and relations, there is also the awareness of “something there” which is not “*simply* the creation of social discourse”.

Nelson also elaborates in this book on his qualification of body theology as an incarnational body theology. He describes body theology as “our attempts to reflect on body experience as revelatory of God” and one approach is to explore the meanings of “incarnation” (Nelson 1992:50). Theologically it refers to God’s embodiment in Christ and the central aim of Christology is “affirmations about Jesus...in service of revealing God’s christic presence and activity in the world below” (Nelson 1992:51). He continues that any Christology should expose the activity and embodiment of God in the present and not confine the divine incarnation exclusively to Jesus. Jesus is central in the history of faith communities, but the paradox is that Jesus himself denied claims to be the exclusive embodiment of God and in doing so, he opened the “continuing possibility for all other persons” (Nelson 1992:52). He describes the union between God and humanity in Jesus Christ as a personal and moral one and it is a possibility that is still possible for everyone as a “communion of divine and human life in flesh”. His interpretation of the incarnation is at odds with that of many other theologians who interpret the incarnation as a once-off and unique event that cannot be repeated by other humans. Nelson’s interpretation of the incarnation is in line with some feminist theologians like Carter Heyward, and while it places an important focus on the relationality of the incarnation, it also reflects the “thin” methodology Nelson is following from his position as ethicist.

Nelson (1992:52) describes the human body as language and as persons we are the words and in Christ, we are “redefined as body words of love, and such body life in us is the radical sign

of God's love for the world and of the divine immediacy in the world". Nelson (1992:53) is of the opinion that with the progress in science and philosophy in the seventeenth century, it became more difficult "to see the bodily consequences of an incarnational faith", but that it is once again time to recapture this feeling. He continues that when this happens, we do not only make theological statements about life in the body, but we will enter into this experience, "letting it speak of God to us, and of us to God".

In Chapter 7 where Nelson deals with the topic of men as pastors and councillors, he writes that "not only our unique personal histories live in us bodily, but also our shared religious and cultural histories" (Nelson 1992:113). He continues that any religious ambiguity which is part of our personal narrative "inevitably lives in our bodyselves" and we bring our faith stories and our body stories into the counselling relationship. He again refers to Wilhelm Reich who saw character as a whole body phenomenon (before his work lost its credibility) and had an influence on Gestalt therapy, bioenergetics and dance therapy (Nelson 1992:114). Body insights were, however, not much explored for their social and religious impact and focussed more on practical techniques. Nelson (1992:115) suggests that moral understanding, caring and connecting are rooted in the experience of the body and this has significance for the counsellor and client. He continues that a disconnection from bodily feeling is a disconnection from moral understanding. Our capacity for compassion is a second incarnational reality which is rooted in the body, as well as our ability to connect with the self, the other and with God (Nelson 1992:117). He is convinced that the anti-body tradition in the Christian West is at the heart of the reluctance to see the "fundamental relationality of all life" and beautifully writes that "as infants we must literally be loved into being human. We must be given the human gift of relational capacity by being tenderly held, sensuously nurtured by the parental body, talked into our own speech, communicated into our own possibilities of communion" (Nelson 1992:118). The flip-side of the coin is that when there is body alienation, "we lose our sense of connectedness to each other, to nature and to God" (Nelson 1992:119).

4.1.4 The reception of James B. Nelson's body theology

Even though liberation theology had an enormous influence on the work of Nelson, I could not find books on liberation theology directly citing his work as a source, for example, the book edited by Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Liberation theology and sexuality* (2006). In her

earlier book, *The queer God*, Althaus-Reid (2003:2) endeavours to re-discover God outside heterosexual ideology in order to facilitate “the coming out of the closet of God by a process of theological queering”. She writes that the body in love has been absent in Christian theology and that there still is “a theology of controlling the love for other’s bodies” (Althaus-Reid 2003:113), but nowhere does she refer to the work of Nelson. In his book, *Body Theology* (1992), Nelson for example refers to the work of Sally McFague in rethinking images of God where she speaks of God as lover, but I once again could not find a reference to the work of Nelson in her book, *The body of God: an ecological theology* published in 1993, one year after Nelson’s second book on body theology. She, however, makes a similar autobiographical statement to that of Nelson in the introduction to her book in contextualising the authorship and audience, writing “I am a white, middle-class, American Christian woman writing to first-world, privileged, mainstream Christians” (McFague 1993:viii), which reflects the same need to situate herself as theologian within a specific context.

His work had a definite impact on men’s studies and gay theology. Krondorfer (2007:263) refers to the positive example of the work of James Nelson, “who has inspired and supported gay theologians with his emphasis on a sex-affirmative body theology”. His profile also appears on the website of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender “Religious Archives Network” (www.lgbtran.org). Curiously enough there is no reference to the work of Nelson in the book of Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Sexuality and the Christian body: their way into the Triune God*, which was published in 1999, a book that explores the relation between the human body and the trinitarian life of God, the relation between human procreation and creation, and marriage for gay and lesbian people (Rogers 1999:1).

The clearest trace of his influence found was in Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart’s book, *Introducing Body Theology* (1998), which was published as part of a series on *Introductions in feminist theology*. Isherwood and Stuart (1999:10) write that the body has always been highly symbolic and that it is the way through which a person and the community express themselves. The body matters and that is why a field such as body theology has developed. Isherwood and Stuart (1998:11) postulate that “...in truth Christian theology has always been an embodied theology rooted in creation, incarnation and resurrection, and in sacrament”. Christian theology has always applied both the *analogia entis* (anology of being) and the *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith) to the body. The body is both the site and the recipient of the revelation. They thus find it hard to understand why, throughout the ages, the body has been

despised and rejected, rather than loved and celebrated. Sexist dualism still continues to reverberate in the way women internalise an identity based on male power structures, the extent to which women experience intense anxiety over social disapproval when they express a positive self-image, their fear of success thereby challenging the male ego, and the continuation of sexual double standards.

Isherwood and Stuart (1998:15) write that the woman is the outsider in religion and theology, “to the holy trinity of man, God and church”. Woman does not measure up to man who is the norm of creation. They refer to the question of Adrienne Reich who asks “whether women cannot begin, at last, to think through the body, to connect to what has been so cruelly organised” and regard this as the fundamental question for incarnational theology, a question which also “sets the scene for body theology which creates theology through the body and not about the body” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:22). They continue that in this way “theories do not get written on the bodies of ‘others’ who then become marginalized and objects of control”. They write that the destiny and history of women are written on their bodies and that the female body provides a new paradigm that can challenge the traditional Word, and in this way, the flesh becomes Word (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:23). They argue that body theology is necessary, because redemption is enacted through the incarnation of God, a redemption that had to be enfleshed and therefore “until the body is liberated from the patriarchal ties that bind it, many of which have been set in place by Christianity, creation will never understand the truly liberating power of incarnation” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:32). To do theology from the body, does not mean that reason is ignored. They state it clearly that body theology endeavours to reunite body, mind and emotions and hopes to heal “the cruel rupture that patriarchal thinking has introduced into theology” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:33).

Like James Nelson, they view liberation theology and feminist theology as movements that made body theology possible. To this Isherwood and Stuart (1998:34) add process thought, as advocated by Alfred Whitehead. Process thought is influenced by evolutionary theory and the world is seen “as ever becoming through relationship”. They continue that in this view the world is not dualistic, but relational and this is sited in the body, in emotions and in the empathetic mind. This means that the search for absolutes, even in religion is futile since “the reality is the process and this will not be fossilized”. Instead of searching for absolute truths, one should rather look for patterns in our experiences as mediated through the body

(Isherwood & Stuart 1998:35). They continue that in this process of the world unfolding, God is also unfolding since God can never be detached from the process. In this view God is also seen as vulnerable and a relationship of love is important.

Feminist theology emphasises the place of experience in theology, “not the experience of the ruling males but of the individual believer” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:38). The total person is taken seriously opposed to a dualistic theology based only on rationality and in this way, “the body in its entirety is the site of experience” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:39). They continue that this entails that we should learn to trust and value our own experience and putting experience at the centre of theology. They follow in Nelson’s footsteps by stating that “the concrete stuff of people’s lives” is at the beginning of theological reflection and not “some lofty contemplation of an Almighty Absolute”. This is a theology from below which contemplates the incarnate God in the “stuff of the world”. They write that body theology makes room for the body and its experiences to be “a site of revelation” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:40). They do admit that by giving supremacy to the body and the experiences of the body, one can fall into total relativism, but write that “understood in the right way experiential/embodied knowing is neither self-indulgent nor narrow”. All experiences can be expanding and also limiting, but they are of the opinion that history of experience has shown that “experiences do change people who in turn change society” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:40). They continue that interpretation is definitely linked to experience, but there is no hierarchy in the feminist method which makes experience as legitimate and significant as interpretation. They refer amply to the work of Nelson in the section “from theory to application” and especially to his understanding of incarnational theology. The idea of finding God in the “material grittiness of everyday life” requires imagination (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:44). They also refer to the body-positive theology of Carter Heyward (1989) that views incarnation as an ongoing process that is “made visible in the embodied relationality between people” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:47).

4.2 A Roman Catholic theology of the body

Next to the liberal protestant body theology of Nelson, a Roman Catholic theology of the body has been developed at more or less the same time. Before Cardinal Wojtyla was inaugurated as Pope John Paul II, he finished the typescript in Polish for a book titled *Man and Women He created them*, and he brought this manuscript from Krakow to Rome soon

after his election (Waldstein 2006:7). This pre-papal work was published in Polish in 1986 as a theology of the body and a copy of the original typescript served as a basis for the pope's Wednesday catechesis which was given over a period of five years. The first (of the 129 catecheses) was delivered on 5 September 1979, and the last on 28 November 1984 (Waldstein 2006:4). The pope himself described the catecheses as "reflections on the theology of the body" with the original title *Man and Women He created them*. The John Paul Institute published these catecheses one by one in Italian; an Italian one-volume edition appeared in 1985 (Waldstein 2006:5). An English translation of 1997 only contained the Wednesday catechesis. The edition used in this document, is *Man and Woman He created them: a theology of the body*, which was compiled in Austria by the International Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family (ITI) over a period of ten years, and published in 2006 (Schönborn 2006:xxv).

The 2006 edition endeavoured to research all the data supplied directly by the pope, as well as the Polish text that served as basis for the catechesis (Waldstein 2006:11).

Another theology of the body was published in 1985 by the Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Centre, written by Benedict M. Ashley O.P. and titled *Theologies of the body: humanist and Christian*. I am not sure what impact it had at the time of publishing, and on the work of John Paul II, but there is, for example no reference to it in the work of the Roman Catholic moral theologian, Eduardo J. Echeverria called "*In the beginning...*": *a theology of the body* (2011). This is unfortunate since it is an impressive and extensive work which takes note of research in other disciplines, as well as of the remarkable influence of the French phenomenological philosophers, for example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

4.2.1 Benedict M. Ashley's theology of the body

Theologies of the body: humanist and Christian (1985) by Ashley is divided into four parts and consists of 727 pages. The first part deals with "Science, the body and the humanist theology", while the second part looks at Christian theologies of the body. The third part is about a radical process interpretation of science, while in the fourth part he expounds a process theology of the body. The first part covers his hermeneutical method, what science says we are (thinking bodies; our bodies serve our brains; matter and energy; evolution and cosmic history), as well as what he calls "humanist theologies of the body" from 1700 – 2000. Under humanist theologies he reviews the influence of Newton, Darwin and Einstein,

the philosophies of Kant and other humanist and phenomenological philosophers and a Marxist critique. Under Christian theologies of the body, Ashley writes about the Platonic Christian theology, the Aristotelian Christian theology and a Christian theology confronted by humanism (which also covers the Cartesian Christian theology). In part three, he looks at the meaning of the evolutionary process, at human creativity, the mind-body problem, and historicity and the human body. In part four Ashley develops a process theology of the body. He reviews ethics as co-creative stewardship and covers topics such as ecology, food, security, sexuality and sociality, as well as communication and government. He writes about God's fullness in bodily form as revealed in the Son of God (Christology from below, from above, from without and from within), the Body of Christ (the true Man and Christian church), and the Mother of God. He then turns to the spiritual body (the dead body of Christ and the immortal body), the glorified body (God revealed in Jesus; persons without bodies; Eucharistic transformation), and in the last chapter (14), he writes about the godliness of matter: how matter mirrors God; the human body as image of God and the body as God's glory.

Ashley makes a similar autobiographical statement (similar to James Nelson, Sally McFague and David Kelsey) in the section on his hermeneutical approach, writing that "I must frankly acknowledge that I view my bodily self and the bodily world which is mine from within the encircling horizon of my life stance as a Roman Catholic Christian living in twentieth century, technological United States of America, looking certainly forward toward personal death in the not too distant future and perhaps to the rapid decadence of the American culture which has been my world" (Ashley 1985:11). He follows an interdisciplinary approach in his work and writes that if one wants to do justice to the problem of the human body, one should "break through the barriers of the academic disciplines" and follow an ecumenical hermeneutic where other world religions are engaged in the effort to understand the human body, human nature and human destiny (Ashley 1985:12). He gives a clear glimpse of his thinking in the beginning of the first chapter, writing that "nowhere and at no time do I find myself to be anything but my body. Nowhere round me do I meet anything but bodies" (Ashley 1985:3).

He also gives a hint of his "process theology of the body" and the notion of co-creative stewardship in part four, writing that "as our eyes meet we realize that we must take charge together of a world in process. We must recreate the world which has created us" (Ashley

1985:5). He writes that in a technological world of science, we can only search for self-understanding through philosophy, myth and mysticism (Ashley 1985:19). In the light of this scientific world he defines a human being as “creative, communicating, socially intelligent animals, motivated by conscious and unconscious emotions and purposes, capable of achieving scientific knowledge through which we can control our own behaviour, our environment and our evolution...we are limited by our past...yet we continue to strive to transcend these limits and so to build a novel future” (Ashley 1985:40). Science can play a role in self-understanding, not as a pure objective truth disconnected from history, but as part of a critical reflection of human’s total experience in history (Ashley 1985:88). He writes that the cosmos has an inherent purpose and meaning and process philosophy can interpret a scientific world-view in a way that would “conceive human meaning as emerging out of the material cosmos and the human body as the ground of the creative human psyche” (Ashley 1985:90).

In reviewing the rivalry between Platonism and Aristotelianism in Christian theology, Ashley (1985:238) is of the opinion that a Christian anthropology should keep the Platonic idea of interior life and spirituality, but resist any form of Platonic dualism. It should incorporate the Aristotelian notion of “the soul as vital principle of the body and the body as the necessary instrument of the soul in thinking and willing”. Such an anthropology should also make room for a scientific world-view, for a positive interpretation of human’s technological control over nature since this contributes “to the advance of the Reign of God in human society” (Ashley 1985:239). He continues that it is also important that a Christian anthropology should take “the material world of our experiences seriously” since we are part of this world through our bodies. Ashley (1985:372) stresses that any ethics are based on an anthropology with some kind of idea of what it means to be human. A Christian anthropology rests also on Christology, not only on an idea of what it is to be human, but on “the historical Jesus in whom alone humanity has been truly realized”. What it means to be human, is a story that has been unfolding from Adam to Jesus, and he writes that “this narrative anthropology provides the basis for Christian ethics” (Ashley 1985:373).

Writing about sexuality and sociality, Ashley (1985:434) laments the occurrence in contemporary culture of sexuality seen mainly as a way to reach intimacy and to satisfy desire away from the responsibility of conceiving and raising children. His opinion is that all living things need to reproduce and that “new genetic combinations” are necessary to make

natural selection in order to adapt to the environment and advance the evolutionary process. He writes that because women are not always ready for intercourse, as with many other species, the norm for human societies is the monogamous and permanent relationship with the child-father relationship nearly unique only to humans and of huge importance (Ashley 1985:435). Male dominance is a biological feature of nearly all species, but to avoid female dependence on men, the relationship between father and child which “ties the male psychologically to responsibilities for his children”, serves as a counterforce (Ashley 1985:436). He views sexuality as a defining characteristic of what it means to be human, and that, in itself is not a matter of free choice. The goal is to become fully ourselves and it is deceiving to think that the goal of sex is pleasure away from committed love and procreation (Ashley 1985:445).

He continues that “the only truly human sexual activity is the transmission of life to the next generation and based on genuine self-giving love”. He then lists the types of people that “do not realize themselves authentically as human sexual beings”: the Don Juan, those who use contraception, those who seek to have children by artificial means, the promiscuous person, the frequenter of prostitutes, and the masturbator. To read this list is almost a surreal experience, firstly because with its vocabulary and judgmental tone it could have been written in a previous century, and secondly, since it feels so disconnected from his creative and interdisciplinary way of thinking. He describes the masturbator as “acquiring a habit, difficult to break, which leads him or her to seek immediate sexual gratification rather than use the gift of sexuality to express love and self-giving to other”, while homosexuals are described as people “who do not face honestly their own psychological abnormality and seek its cure or make the best of it without exploiting others or degrading their own dignity as persons” (Ashley 1985:447). He does, however, admit that the oppression of women is one of the great evils resulting from the abuses of sex.

His final chapter is titled “The Godliness of Matter”. He writes that ethics should be rooted in ourselves as bodies and not only in a subjective self (Ashley 1985:693). Even though thought has a spatial dimension, it is rooted in the brain and the sense organs which are dependent on the rest of the body for its functioning and the effecting of human creativity (Ashley 1985:694). He continues that theology should take note of the advances in science for self-understanding and should overcome the notion that matter is somehow a source of evil in the world. This peculiar idea could be overcome if theology acknowledges the fact that all ideas

“arise out of matter...even our loftiest ideas of God and the spiritual world”. Matter is pure potentiality, but cannot actualise itself and can only be actualised by “actually existing beings”.

He writes that we can see the face of God in the ocean of matter, also called the “Mirror of God” (Ashley 1985:695) and that the physical universe is “a drama of billions of actors”. If the universe is mirroring God, and if this universe is known through the human body and humans begin to see God, “and in seeing its own body as part of the universe begins to know its inner self, then indeed in its inner self it find the image of God” (Ashley 1985:697). He views the human body as the “most complex and highly unified primary unit in the material universe”, and as the only one that can know the universe. The unifying principle of the human body is human intelligence, but this intelligence is also deeply hidden from itself (Ashley 1985:696). He continues that we know our bodies better and learn who we are by investigating the world around us, and in doing so, “from our body begin to know something about its soul”.

4.2.2 The theology of the body of Pope John Paul II

In the preface to the 2006 English edition of the pope’s book *Man and Woman He created them: a theology of the body*, Christopher West writes that the theology of the body of Pope John Paul II is a response to the sexual revolution, to modern rationalism, to super-spiritualism, to Cartesian dualism and to all disembodied anthropologies (West 2006:xxvii). He describes the world as “reaping a bitter suffering from the lies of the sexual revolution” and as “a mission field ready to soak up the good news of the “redemption of the body” that he proclaimed” (West 2006:xxix). He continues that the pope’s theology of the body is “a bread broken for all” and that much academic and popular work needs to be done. West has occupied himself with the popularisation of the theology of the Pope. He wrote a commentary on theology of the body in *Theology of the body explained: a commentary on John Paul II’s “Gospel of the body”*. (2003). Another attempt to popularise the theology of the body, is through his own website (www.christopherwest.com) from where he sells CDs and his other books written on this topic, including *Theology of the Body for Beginners* and *Good News About Sex & Marriage*. He also facilitates workshops on the topic.

Michael Waldstein opens his extensive introduction to *Man and Woman He created them: a theology of the body* (2006) with a reference to the sexual revolution, which “was heralded by its advocates as a breakthrough for human development, for the freedom and happiness of the person” (Waldstein 2006:1). He refers to the influence of Wilhelm Reich, a student of Freud who initiated this revolution with his book published in 1936 and believed that “the free availability of sexual pleasure beyond the limits imposed by the patriarchal Christian family would lead to health and happiness” and even prevent war, insanity and mysticism. He continues that effective contraception was crucial during the sexual revolution. Waldstein asks whether the sexual revolution really brought happiness or merely transformed people into ‘users’ and ‘consumers’ (Waldstein 2006:2). In contrast to this, he continues that the pope’s book puts forward “sexual politics of the radical gift of self of man and woman to each other, profoundly different from mere use and consumption”.

Waldstein (2006:15) refers to *Theology of the Body* as the pope’s “catechesis par excellence”. The book is divided into two parts and is 731 pages long. Part one is structured around three words of Christ that are central to God’s plan for humans and for human love. The first word is Christ’s appeal to the “beginning” (what “beginning” means and a perspective on the “Redemption of my body” (Rom 8:23); the meaning of original solitude; the meaning of original unity (Gen 2:23); the meaning of original nakedness (Gen 2:25); man in the dimension of gift and the spousal meaning of the body; the mystery of original innocence; and the body as sign and “knowledge” and procreation (Gen 4:1). The second word of Christ is about His appeals to the human heart (the sermon on the mount; the man of concupiscence — dealing with original shame, the insatiability of the union and the corruption of the spousal meaning of the body; commandment an ethos — dealing with adultery and desire; the heart, accused or called — about the correct understanding of the body and the problem of erotic spontaneity; the ethos of redemption of the body; purity as “life according to the Spirit” (1Cor 12:18 - 27); and the gospel of purity of heart — a theology of the body and pedagogy). The third word of Christ appeals to the Resurrection (the resurrection of the body as a reality of the future world and continence for the Kingdom of Heaven — dealing with the spousal meaning of the body as the foundation of Christ’s call to continence; virginity and marriage; and concupiscence and the gift from God).

Waldstein (2006:15) writes that in part two Christ’s teachings unfold by focussing on “the Pauline teaching on ‘the mystery’ of spousal love in Ephesians 5”. These insights are applied

“to the concrete conjugal lives of men and women”. The heading of part two is “The Sacrament” (the dimensions of covenant and grace — a detailed analysis of Ephesians 5:21—33, and the analogy and mystery which is at the foundation of the sacramentality of marriage; marriage as the primordial sacrament and the connection between sacrament and the redemption of the body). Part two focuses on the dimension of Sign (the language of the body reread in the Truth, the concupiscence of the flesh and the reality of the sign); the Song of Songs with the question whether it speaks of eros or agape; when the language of the body becomes the language of liturgy; the law of Life as the inheritance of humans — a discussion on ethical problems regarding responsible parenthood, contraception and fertility; an outline on conjugal spirituality which deals with the power that flows from sacramental “consecration”; an analysis of the virtue of continence; the continence between arousal and emotion and the gist of reverence.

At the heart of the theological writings of cardinal Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II is a “triangle of theses” which stretches from his doctoral dissertation on St John of the Cross in 1948 till his last encyclical in 2003 (Waldstein 2006:23). At the first point of this triangle is the general notion that love is to give oneself; running horizontally from this point to the other corner, is the thesis that the gift of self is specifically completed in the spousal love between man and woman; these two points find fullness in the third thesis running vertically upwards to the third corner, that the Trinity is the exemplar of Love and Gift (Waldstein 2006:24). He continues that this “triangle of theses” forms the core of the pope’s theological and philosophical personalism, which he first stumbled upon in the works of St. John of the Cross, his spiritual master as a twenty-one year old student in the underground seminary in Krakow. Later in his life, he encountered the personalism of Kant and Scheler, which “enriched this Carmelite point of departure”. Waldstein (2006:124) is of the opinion that there is an intimate link between St. John of the Cross’ theology of a spousal gift of self and the pope’s departure point in theology of the body. Waldstein (2006:26) writes that faith as a way to a union between God and humans formed the main theme of his doctoral dissertation. The dissertation planted a seed that influenced his later thoughts on love and personal subjectivity and emphasised “the trinitarian aspect of the transforming union between soul and God” (Waldstein 2006:28).

Kant’s anti-trinitarian personalism also had a great influence on the work of Wojtyla/John Paul II. Kant places the focus on the moral dignity and autonomy of a person and chooses for

an autonomous self (or rather a series of unrelated selves), and avoids the relational nature of trinitarian language (Waldstein 2006:55). Kant also influenced the pope's ideas on marriage and sex. Kant's two principles on sexual ethics, which also formed the basis for the pope's sexual ethics, state that a person should never be enjoyed for pleasure as a mere object, since it violates that person's dignity. Furthermore, one gives oneself to another person in sexual union (Waldstein 2006:56). He continues that Kant was of the opinion that marriage, as a permanent contract, is the only remedy for the loss of autonomy in sex, since it was framed in the context of marriage, "I own the one who episodically owns me". The opinion of the Pope and of Kant, however, diverges on the notion of spousal love, which is absent in Kant's idea of marriage. Waldstein (2006:57) writes that the pope connects sex as a "natural word" with the spousal meaning of the body, that the human body has the capacity to speak of love and express "a deep fulfilment of the person through the gift of self", an opinion which is in sharp contrast to Kant's description of the autonomous self. Kant views sexuality and personal love as unconnected. Waldstein (2006:60) draws a parallel between Kant's anti-sex stance (sex as separate from a person) and the sexual revolution (embracing detached pleasure) in that both have at its source a dualism between person and nature. In contrast to this, the Pope holds the view that there is an intense intersection in human sexuality between person and nature and that "the human body with the sexual language created by God has a deep kinship with the person". The sentient body is created *for the person* as an expression of personal love (Waldstein 2006:60). The Pope also holds the opinion that procreation as a natural outflow of marriage, is an expression of this unity of nature and person, and firmly locates procreation in the personal love between man and woman, husband and wife (Waldstein 2006:63).

In his dissertation on St. John of the Cross, the student Wojtyla emphasises the role of conscious experience, where faith is described as a way of union with God (Waldstein 2006:81). The Pope interprets experience from the perspective of faith in contrast to theologians who want to elevate experience in opposition to the objective content of faith. Waldstein (2006:82) writes that for the Pope, "faith is not replaced by experience, but it remains the comprehensive form of Christian experience". He continues that faith has primacy in Christian experience which does not imply that experience is unimportant. Experience remains relevant when "a living faith deeply transforms human experience by introducing the person to a path of union with God". Experience is shaped by love and Pope John Paul II writes that the object of Christian experience is "the salvific presence of God in Christ in the very center of life and of history" (Waldstein 2006:85). Wojtyla had a

personalist vision that flows strongly through his writing (of his dissertation in 1948), and through his interpretation of Vatican II in 1972, up to his pastoral programme set out in 1979. This vision holds that human experience should be transformed by faith, that faith “must be received and enriched in the lived experience of personal subjectivity” (Waldstein 2006:87).

Why did the Pope write his theology of the body? It is a defence against Descartes’ attack on the body, with the Pope stating that the body can never be reduced to mere matter and affirming that “the richest source of knowledge of the body, is the Word made flesh” (Waldstein 2006:96). The incarnation indicates that the body has a spousal meaning: the body was created in Christ and for him and “Christ’s gift of self is thus the goal that most deeply explains God’s original intention in creating the body” (Waldstein 2006:97). It is also an important response to the Cartesian-Kantian-Schelerian form of subjectivity and a defence against a scientific-technological attack from scientific rationalism which holds a narrow mechanist image of nature, especially from the viewpoint of biology. The Pope views the body as profoundly meaningful with an inseparable unitive and procreative meaning, which reveals the true focus of his theology of the body — a defence of the *Humanae Vitae*: the unitive and procreative meaning of the conjugal act ((Waldstein 2006:99). *Humanae Vitae*, an encyclical written by Pope Paul VI was issued on 25 July 1968 and reaffirms the traditional position of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to love in marriage, responsible parenthood and birth control. *Humanae Vitae* is a response against the control of matter by technology (for example contraception), and a call to the duty of man to humanise nature.

Waldstein (2006:101) writes that the opponents of *Humanae Vitae* do not criticise it because of its failure to grapple with modern issues, but because it is “an act of treason against the newly established alliance between Catholicism and modernity”. With technology man wants to extend his domination over the totality of life, which includes the body and soul and the transmission of life. This “technological mastery over nature” is at the core of the issue of contraception (Waldstein 2006:102). With his defence of *Humanae Vitae* in his theology of the body, the Pope wants to emphasise that the human person is also a body, and not only has a body. The body is not outside the person — through the body, a person “speaks the language of self-gift and fruitfulness” as part of the divine plan for human love (Waldstein 2006:104). The Pope refers to this divine plan for human love as “an adequate anthropology” with *Humanae Vitae* being the “concrete moral application of this anthropology in married life, above all in the question of contraception” (Waldstein 2006:107).

Waldstein (2006:124) explains the pope's argument of his theology of the body in three steps: the first step divulges the teachings of Jesus about the spousal meaning of the body; the second step reveals the functioning of the spousal meaning of the body in the great sacrament of love (marriage), and in the third step, the defence of *Humanae Vitae*, requires from men and women "to reread this language of the body in truth". He continues that the guiding star for reading the pope's theology of the body, is that the "gifting" of the human body expresses the essential truth of that body. Waldstein (2006:126) summarises the pope's judgment of the sexual revolution, writing that it does not value the beauty of sex and separates sex from the profound spousal meaning of the body. It spreads the lie of self autonomy and the use of persons for pleasure instead of the truth of the radical gift of the body. Jesus is not primarily a moralist, but a redeemer of the body who inscribes "the law of love on the hearts of flesh" (Waldstein 2006:127).

4.2.3 The influence of Pope John Paul II's theology of the body

It is difficult to judge the influence of a theology of the body within the Roman Catholic Church. It does seem as if there is a disconnect between the emphasis of the Pope's theology on sex and pleasure exclusively in the context of the spousal meaning of the body, with its deep connection to procreation, and how Catholic Christians live their lives. The same disconnect is probably at work regarding Catholics' use of contraception. It seems that the English edition of 2006 was aimed at an American audience with the foreword written by Christopher West who promotes the pope's theology of the body through his books, workshops and CDs. I was unable to find a copy of this book in, for example, the Netherlands. Benedict Ashley's theology of the body does not have the same influence, even though it is a very sophisticated and contemporary work of theology, with a high admiration for the human mastery of technology (in contrast to the suspicion of technology evident in the Pope's theology of the body). As mentioned before, it is disturbing that there seems to be a deep rift between Ashley's high regard for science, evolution and process thought, and his very conservative judgement against masturbators, adulterers, homosexuals, and people who use contraception.

A recent work of Eduardo Echeverria, "*In the beginning...*": *a theology of the body* (2011), explores the theology of the body of Pope John Paul II and its contribution to the

homosexuality debate. Echeverria (2011:xix) considers the aim of his book as “laying out the biblical, theological and philosophical foundations of the theology of the body in order to apply the insights of that theology to the vexing issue of homosexuality”. Echeverria describes sexual difference, which is the foundation of the ontology of creation, as the starting point of John Paul II’s theology of the body (Meiring 2013:123). He continues that the pope uses Genesis 1 and 2 as an appeal to the “creational ordinance of marriage”, and in this way imitates Christ. In doing so, the pope expounds a philosophical anthropology of the bodyperson. Despite the Fall, the deepest reality of creation remains the way God made it.

Echeverria expresses the opinion that the programme of “authentic Catholicism” (Etienne Gilson) has “come to life” in John Paul II’s theology of the body, and is most relevant to the phenomenon of homosexuality, also in its practice. Its relevance lies in the theology of the bodyperson, which “provides not only a foundation for anthropology and sexual ethics in the ontology of creation”, but brings God’s healing grace to bear on “the condition [and practice] of a disordered sexuality that reflects the brokenness of our sinful world” (Meiring 2013:123). Sexual moral choices are exercised through the activities of the body, and Echeverria argues that a person’s integrity (the intrinsic good of self-integration) should be respected to judge a sexual act as morally right. This means that a person’s sexuality must be integrated into his spiritual and bodily being. Then marital intercourse between a man and a woman can be a communion of persons. Sexual immorality (which includes homosexual acts) is a self-disintegration, “an alienation of the body from the consciously experiencing self, because the body is used as a mere instrument in the service of that self”. Echeverria does not agree with the viewpoint that homosexual tendencies are morally neutral, but sees it as “objectively disordered”, because it motivates a man to intrinsically immoral homosexual practices. Echeverria concludes his book by stating that the aim of the Church’s pastoral practice regarding the sexual sin of homosexuality should be “the movement of a ‘contrite heart’, drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first in Christ” (Meiring 2013:123).

Echeverria (2011:123) asks the crucial question whether human experience could be regarded as a source of revelation. He refers to the retired professor in ethics, Sister Margaret Farley, R.S.M. (Sisters of Mercy) who considers scripture, tradition, other secular disciplines, and contemporary experience to be sources of theological ethics. She regards these sources as equally important (Echeverria 2011:146). He continues that she seems to give experience a

higher order since it is “an authority that modifies the prior norms that would order it” and in this way, also has a priority over scripture since scripture itself is a product of human experience. She views experience as an important content of all the other sources and states that it should always be taken into regard when interpreting the other sources. Farley views scripture as a record of a person’s experience of God, with tradition being the lived experience of a faith community and other secular disciplines influenced by the experience of the people that practice them. Echeverria (2011:147) writes that according to Farley “the authority of experience trumps even the Bible’s own authority”, with her arguing that the Bible should make sense to the person accepting it and that the Bible cannot be believed “unless it ‘rings true’ to our deepest capacity for truth and goodness”.

He questions whether there is a “subjectification of authority” in Farley’s proposal and admits that it is not possible to separate biblical authority from man, recognising the content as a revelation of truth (Echeverria 2011:148). Yet he agrees with the Calvinist theologian John Frame that “what makes Scripture the Word of God is simply the fact that God has spoken it”. He appeals to Aidan Nichols, a Dominican priest and theologian and writes that “knowing and experiencing the divine realities of God’s self-revelation can only occur for the subjects who belong to the Church, the new and reborn humanity in Christ, the body of Christ”. This implies that one cannot appeal to Christian experience against the Church in an effort to deny its common faith (Echeverria 2011:165). He also appeals to Bavinck writing that to appeal to Christian experience against the teachings of the Church would mean that there will be no Christianity left. Bavinck describes religious experience as subjective and individualistic, and it “opens the door to all sorts of arbitrariness in religion and actually enthrones anarchism: religion as a private thing”. It is impossible to use experience to make truth claims against the living God (Echeverria 2011:165).

The Lutheran theologian, Allen Jorgenson writes that neither Schleiermacher nor Rahner “uses experience in a mode whereby the subject becomes the arbiter of all things theological” and that although the subject is the starting point, it is more a heuristic than foundational point of entry into theology (Jorgenson 2007:3). Schleiermacher appeals to Christian experience in an effort to understand who Jesus is, how he is important today and how the “mind of Christ” applies to the lives of Christians (Jorgenson 2007:121). Experience is an important category in connecting to Scripture, but human experience can only refer people to the Scripture “wherein our experiences can be interpreted in the light of the event of Jesus

Christ” (Jorgenson 2007:188). He continues that Scripture becomes alive when interpreting human experience, but that the “givenness of Scripture attests to its priority”. This interpretation is more in line with that of the Roman Catholic theology of the body, whereas Nelson and others like Margaret Farley regard Scripture, tradition, other secular disciplines and contemporary experience as equal sources and do not qualify human experience/bodily experience as “Christian” experience.

Echeverria (2011:175) explores the importance of the pope’s phenomenological reflection as developed in the book, *Acting Person* written by the then cardinal Wojtyla where he refers to his method as “*pausing at the irreducible*”. This method is based on Wojtyla’s belief “in the primordial uniqueness of human being, and thus in the basic irreducibility of the human being to the natural world” (Echeverria 2011:176). The substance of “pausing at the irreducible” is for Echeverria (2011:177) synonymous with the “subjectivity and lived experience of the human being”. He continues that Wojtyla follows an anti-reductionist approach to reality, which, in the words of Wojtyla “is to allow experience to speak for itself as best it can and right to the end”. Opposed to phenomenologists who interpret experience as the cognitive acts in which the object itself is given bodily/directly, Wojtyla writes that “experience should be considered as the source and basis of all knowledge about objects, but this does not mean that it is the one and only one kind of experience and that this experience is the so-called ‘sense’ perception” (Echeverria 2011:177). Phenomenology importantly focuses on the integral experience of humans which, for Wojtyla, is the lived experience of human beings. Wojtyla, however, argues that one cannot seek truth through the cognition based on lived experience (reality), but that cognition should surpass itself and seek truth in the transcendent object — “something that exists (*esse*) with a real and objective existence independently of the act of knowing” (Echeverria 2011:182).

Wojtyla also argues that a person is revealed through his action, and writes that “man manifests himself...through his body...It is generally recognized that the human body is in its visible dynamism the territory where, or in a way even the medium whereby, the person expresses himself” (Echeverria 2011:188). In his theology of the body, the pope writes that “the structure of this body is such that it permits him to be author of genuinely human activity” with the moral significance that a person’s body is not extrinsic to his moral acts and that “the person, including his body, is completely entrusted to himself, and it is in the unity of the body and soul that the person is the subject of his own actions” (Echeverria 2011:187).

This implies that all man's acts are a bodily expression of a person and in this way, the body grounds human subjectivity, "so that all knowledge and thought has bodily roots" (Echeverria 2011:189). The pope writes in his theology of the body that man has self-mastery (freedom) "in order for man to be able to '*give himself*' in order to become a gift and to fully find himself" (Echeverria 2011:190). The body is a sign of the person (and not merely a thing as proclaimed by science), which means that the body is in its deepest sense "personal". Echeverria (2011:203) interprets the pope's claim that "our human experience is in some way a legitimate means for theological interpretation" by writing that the pope does not set revelation up against experience by arguing that the revelation of the authority of God's Word "does not exclude experience" (Berkouwer), but argues "that it is in the experience itself that the authority is acknowledged and confessed".

This book is a sophisticated interpretation of the theology of the body as it pertains to the question of homosexuality. In the foreword Janet Smith recommends the book as a standard textbook for graduate courses in moral theology. In the end, the question remains whether this is truly a theology of the body or would it not be more accurately described as a book on moral theology/sexual ethics using the body as object.

In an interview with the Jesuit magazine, *La Civiltà Cattolica* the current pontiff, Pope Francis said that the Roman Catholic Church is too focussed on homosexuality, contraception and abortion and needs to become more merciful (BBC 2013). According to this article, Pope Francis said that "the church's pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently" and that a new balance should be found "otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel". He pleads that the wounds of the faithful should be healed and that those people who have been excluded or "have fallen away" should be sought out. He said that it is not possible for the church to insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods, and that is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time. Pope Francis said that "this Church of which we should be thinking is the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people. We must not reduce the bosom of the universal Church to a nest protecting our mediocrity". It will be fascinating to see whether the different stance of the present pontiff will add any new or different insights to the Church's theology of the body or to the moral

theology of an academic like Eduardo Echeverria or the work of a popular theologian like Christopher West.

4.3 Body theology versus a theology of the body

Nelson does not refer to or really take note of the stance of the Roman Catholic Church towards the body as expressed in the work of Pope John Paul II, but this is probably because the first English edition of the Pope's theology of the body only appeared in 1995. On the other hand, neither did the Pope take note of Nelson's work or was Nelson's work referred to in, for example, the work of the Roman Catholic theologian Benedict Ashley, *Theologies of the body: humanist and Christian* (1985) published in America in English. Isherwood and Stuart (1998:73), however, noted the work of Pope John Paul II in a section titled "Ambiguity Continues" and this also set their contribution to the development of body theology apart from that of Nelson. They describe the pope as a "deeply conservative theologian who has wrestled with the meaning of the body" and the pope's attitude towards the body as permeating his understanding of contraception, marriage and homosexuality. They interpret his attitude towards the body in his description (of the body) as "nuptial", meaning that it is created for union/marriage, and that it is a gift for the giving and receiving of persons in community (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:73).

They continue that in this way the pope has centralised sexuality in the human person. The body should never be objectified or used for personal pleasure, but it is "created for mutual, self-giving relationship and in this respect they image the nature of their creator". Same-sex relationships and the use of contraception violate the nuptial meaning of the body which should result in procreation. This is the reason the pope has described homosexuality as an "objective disorder" (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:74). They continue that the pope uses his theory of complementarity to justify his approach to men and women who he describes as "equal but different". In the eyes of the pope, humans can only find full realisation through the duality of "masculine" and "feminine". They write that the pope also views the body in terms of enemyhood, since the body "desires, lusts, alienates us from the created order, reduces us to entirely self-centred creatures and makes it hard for us to attain the virtue of love" (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:74). They come to the conclusion that the pope displays the same deep ambiguity towards the body as revealed in the history of Christianity, and write "that it is important to grasp that it is ambiguity, rather than through-going dualism, that

characterizes this tradition”. It is also important for Isherwood and Stuart (1998:75) to mention that, throughout Christian history, this ambiguity is linked to a deep suspicion of female bodiliness and “a complex, dialectical association of female bodiliness with imperfection and therefore anti-divinity”.

Their call is for an incarnational theology that would declare the body as sacrament, since sacrament is open towards body-appreciation and bodies being the divine presence on earth (Isherwood & Stuart 1999:148). This call is not for a “body-beautiful” religion, but is much rather a commitment to “the power, the passion, the pain, the sorrow, the joy, .. the mystery and the majesty of the human body and the body of creation” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:149). They continue that body theology aims to construct a new anthropology centred on embodiment. Such an anthropology should incorporate notions of the relational self, the natural solidarity and social togetherness of human beings, the cosmic nature of human embodiment (“all bodies, cosmic, animal and human have an effect upon one another and that effect can reach across space and time”) and recognise the social and communal character of humans. They conclude that it is astounding that conservative theologians (like Pope John Paul II) and queer and feminist theologians can agree that “the flesh is the hinge of salvation” and that it is crucial to guard against the vanishing of “the real, lived, laughing, suffering, birthing and dying body underneath the philosophical and theological meaning it is called to bear” (Isherwood & Stuart 1998:151).

The sexual revolution had a profound impact on the development of a theology focussing on the body. Within Protestant theology and among feminist and gay theologians, this new theology was denoted as “body theology” whereas some Roman Catholic theologians referred to it as “a theology of the body”. Why, and how is that significant? Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians are now united in their appreciation of the unity of the body as an important correction to the Cartesian dualism of the previous centuries. There is consensus between theologians that the body/mind is a unit (as captured in the term *bodyperson* or *bodyself*); that we do not only have a body, but that we are also our bodies; that the body as subject is important and not only the body as object; and that the body is the way to gain knowledge of its life-world/concrete context.

Both Nelson, on the one hand, and Isherwood and Stuart on the other, qualify body theology as an incarnational theology; a Roman Catholic theology of the body does the same. The

Word who became flesh illustrated the significance of life in a human body and the gift of God by becoming human in Christ, serves as a language for the human body to speak the language of gift to others and to God. Within a theology of the body, this is a unique, once-off event that could only have been made possible in Jesus Christ. In body theology, the incarnation is seen as an ongoing event which is manifested in the relationality between people.

They do, however, diverge in their interpretation (and appreciation) of the impact of the sexual revolution and the advances of scientific technology. While a number of reformed, feminist and gay theologians acknowledge that the sexual revolution harboured a certain decadence and illusion of freedom via sexual excess, they have a deep appreciation for the awareness it created regarding patriarchal and heterosexist dominance in society and the effect it had in marginalising women, black people, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, as well as disabled, single and aging persons. They also questioned the prototype of the nuclear family and the importance of the institution of marriage. The Roman Catholic theologians discussed before are apparently close to the official teaching office of the Roman Catholic Church. They tend to focus on the “lies of the sexual revolution” — although it did bring the issues of women, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people to the fore, they interpret the sexual revolution as an attack on the values of the Roman Catholic Church. It is in particular deemed to be an attack on the sacrament of marriage, which is the unity between a man and a woman, an attack on the spousal meaning of the body, which is interpreted as unitive and procreative and expressed in *Humanae Vitae*. This encyclical requires men and women “to reread this language of the body in truth”, because only then can the human body be expressed as a gift.

This debate is also connected to the issue of humans and nature and the fear in the Roman Catholic Church that with technology, man wants to extend his domination over the totality of life, which includes the body and soul and the transmission of life through his “technological mastery over nature”. This is at the core of the issues of contraception and abortion (Waldstein 2006:102). With his defence of *Humanae Vitae* in his theology of the body, the Pope wishes to emphasise that the human person is also a body, and not only has a body (that can be owned, consumed and manipulated). The suspicion towards scientific technology apparent in a Roman Catholic theology of the body, makes it less suitable for interdisciplinary research and one that includes dialogue with natural sciences, whereas body

theology, as developed by James Nelson is better positioned for an interdisciplinary enquiry of the body as illustrated by the dialogue in his work with psychology, anthropology and medical practice.

Both strands of theology focussing on the body developed from an interplay with Christian ethics and soon became involved with the issues of gay and lesbian people, marriage, nuclear families, abortion, and contraception. It is no wonder that body theology/ a theology of the body from the start focussed on the issue of gay and lesbian persons, on gay marriage and on the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy in the church. It also focussed on the issue of women as clergy, and on the right of women to have a say over their own bodies and specifically through the use of contraception and the option of abortion. The difference in the interpretation of the sexual revolution, as has become clear in the difference between body theology and the theology of the body, is reflected in the deep split within many churches on the place of gay and lesbian marriage in the church, on gays and lesbians in ordained ministry, and on the ordination of women in recent decades.

As a result of the different interpretations of the impact of the sexual revolution, some protestant, gay and feminist body theologians are comfortable to take the body and the experiences of the body as a starting point for theology and also interpret the body as an important site of knowledge and a source of revelation on par with Scripture and tradition. They tend to share the awareness in other disciplines like sociology, philosophy and psychology that the approach must be from the body and not merely about the body. Roman Catholic theologians of the body tend to diverge on the point of accepting the body and the experiences of the body as a source of revelation, and to take the body seriously enough as a site of knowledge and as a site of resistance against various forms of oppression emanating from patriarchal heterosexism.

A Roman Catholic theology of the body as developed by Pope John Paul II is based on an “adequate” anthropology of love and appropriately placed in the lap of theological anthropology, but one that follows the line of conventional theological anthropologies: man created (as man and woman) in the image of God (*imago Dei*) based on Genesis 1:26-27, the Fall because of sin, redemption and a new life in Christ (Meiring 2013:124). The dilemma of body theology as developed by James Nelson is that it remains stuck in Christian ethics and specifically in sexual ethics. As important as new insights about human sexuality are, such a

narrow focus on ethics can also inhibit the scope of body theology. This is where I wholeheartedly agree with Isherwood and Stuart (1998:149) that body theology should aim to construct a new theological anthropology centred on embodiment. This is also the aim of this research: to find a suitable theological anthropology where body theology can be at home and be relevant within a concrete life world.

4.4 The corporeal turn in theology

The question at this stage is whether one can truly talk about a corporeal turn in theology in the same way that one refers to it within other academic disciplines (as explored in Chapter 1) or is there another dynamic at play. What is clear at this point is that the body became a contentious topic in the church of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the wake of the sexual revolution that was sparked by, among others, the work of Wilhelm Reich in the 1930s. This revolution reached its culmination in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s when its momentum was stumped by social, economic and political factors — the HIV/AIDS epidemic being one of them. I agree with Isherwood and Stuart (1998:149) in expressing their amazement at conservative Roman Catholic theologians, as well as queer and feminist theologians who agree that “the flesh is the hinge of salvation”. This is an indication of the far-reaching influence of the French phenomenological philosophers after the Second World War, also in theology, and especially on the development of a theology of the body within Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Theology was at the forefront in incorporating their ideas or at least did so at the same time as sociology.

Pope John Paul II wrote the manuscript, *Man and woman He created them* in Polish in the 1970s when he was cardinal Wojtyla; it formed the basis for the development of his theology of the body through his Wednesday catechisms from 1979 to 1984. In parallel, James Nelson formed his ideas for his book, *Embodiment: an approach to sexuality and Christian theology* (1978), while the Roman Catholic theologian, Benedict Ashley published his book, *Theologies of the body: humanist and Christian* in 1985. The pope’s theology of the body was translated into many languages and reached a wider audience, especially since its author was the pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. Even though Ashley’s book was an imaginative work based on interdisciplinary research, its impact was much less widespread and is seldom referenced in the work of other Roman Catholic theologians. The pope’s theology of the body had a continuous influence from its first publication, written in Italian,

and made up of individual catechesis. It spanned the period from the early 1980s to 2006, when an English translation was published, which, I would argue, was targeting a wider American readership. Christopher West, who popularises the pope's theology of the body wrote the forward to the English edition. The work had a continuous influence in academic circles, including the most recently published book, *"In the beginning...": a theology of the body* (2011), which was written by the Roman Catholic moral theologian Echeverria.

The work of James Nelson was selectively referenced by gay theologians and in the work of the feminist theologians, Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart who published their book, *Introducing Body Theology* in 1998. James Nelson's second book, *Body theology* (1992) was only published 14 years after his first book in 1978 and as far as I could fathom, the only book published after 1992 on the topic of body theology within Protestant circles, was that of Isherwood and Stuart in 1998. This was in line with the trend in other disciplines, with many books on the body/embodiment appearing in the middle to late 1990s and again in the early 2000s. The ideas of Nelson were influential, and for example, in South Africa, the topic of the body/embodiment was picked up by New Testament academics Jeromy Punt and Johannes Vorster. The notion of a theology of the body, however, appears to have had limited influence within Protestant theology. While it came to halt in the late 1990s, it continued strongly and was popularised within certain circles in the Roman Catholic Church.

It is possible to talk of a corporeal turn in theology when referring to the influence of the post-war French phenomenological philosophers (particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty) in theology, which led to a deep affirmation of the unity of the body. This was in stark contrast to the Cartesian mind-body dualism. More recently, within some Protestant circles, the pattern has been similar to that of other academic disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy and cognitive science, that strongly debated body/embodiment in the late 1990s. This, however, came to an end, whereas new books on the topic of body/embodiment were published in the 2000s in psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The notion of the body/embodiment — not in the format of body theology — appears again in the late 2000s in the work of theologians, including Wentzel van Huyssteen's *Alone in the world? Human uniqueness in science and theology* (2006); Wesley Wildman's *Science and religious anthropology. A spiritually evocative naturalist interpretation of human life* (2009); Nancey Murphy's *Bodies and souls, or spirited bodies* (2006); Anthony Pinn's *Embodiment and the new shape of Black Theological Thought* (2010); and the work of South African theologians,

such as Jan-Albert van den Berg's *An embodied spirituality: Perspectives for a bodily spiritual anthropology* (2008), and Jeromy Punt's *Paul, body theology and morality* (2005). It indicates that the corporeal turn in Protestant theology experienced a new momentum in the late 2000s, but not as body theology.

In the following chapter I shall look at how the body is interpreted within theological anthropology, and whether it has taken note of the corporeal turn in other disciplines. The search is for a theological anthropology that consistently employs the body as an organising principle, an "adequate" theological anthropology centred on body/embodiment.

Chapter 5

The body in theological anthropology

The 2010 film, *Le sentiment de la chair* (The sentiment of the flesh) is about the obsessive relationship between a professor in radiology and a student in anatomical drawing who discover innovative ways of exploring each other's bodies in an attempt to understand each other's uniqueness. At one stage professor Benoît remarks that "a thousand painters died not knowing the sentiment of the flesh. Many more will die not knowing" (Smell like screen spirit 2011). This is a reference to French philosopher and art critic, Dennis Diderot, who wrote *Essay on Painting* in the eighteenth century. He maintains that the realism in a painting derives from form and that life originates from colour. He writes:

It has been said that the most beautiful color in the world was this lovely redness of innocence, youth, beauty, modesty and chastity...for indeed flesh is difficult to render; this unctuous white, even without being pale; this mixture of red and blue which imperceptibly perspires. This is blood and life which create the colorist's despair. He who has acquired the feeling for flesh has progressed a lot; the rest is nothing in comparison. Thousand painters have died without knowing flesh; thousand others will die without feeling it (Rabaté 1996:34).

The aim of the previous chapters is to open "deeper and deeper inquiries" within theology regarding the body and to explore how the body and the experiences of the body can serve as a "grounding source of knowledge" in theology. The quest is for a theological anthropology that can reflect a deeper understanding of the rich and complex dimensions of bodily life. The quest is for a theological anthropology that has this sentiment of the flesh. How does contemporary theological anthropology interpret the body and experiences of the body and does it incorporate the corporeal turn?

5.1 The landscape of contemporary theological anthropology

Theological anthropology tries to answer the question: "What does it mean to be human?" This question has been prevalent throughout Christian thinking, but only in the twentieth century has theological anthropology come into its own right as a theological discipline. There has been a sharp focus on the "self" and theology had to take note of it. Cortez (2010:4) writes that in the twentieth century there has been an abundance of scientific

disciplines trying to understand the human being and that this data contributed to the development of theological anthropology. Theologians, including Von Balthasar, Barth, Rahner, Tillich and Pannenberg were aware that a “God-centered theology” can take the human person seriously and that such a theology can acknowledge the key role that God has given humans as “the object of covenantal relationality and eschatological purposes”. John Calvin (1559) wrote in Book One of his *Institutes of the Christian religion*, that “without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern” (McNeil 1960: 35). Cortez (2010:5) confirms that for theological anthropology the relationship between God and humans is the foundation for knowledge of human beings and that “Jesus Christ manifests true humanity”. Referring to Pannenberg, Cortez (2010:7) stresses how important it is that theologians do not simply take data from nontheological anthropology and use it as a basis for their work, but rather reshape these conclusions to fit their vision.

Van den Brink and Van der Kooi (2012:237) write that theological anthropologies of the twentieth century were based on the doctrine of creation (Karl Rahner), the history of the covenant (Hendrikus Berkhof), a christological approach (Karl Barth), the eschatological method (Wolfhart Pannenberg), the doctrine of justification (Eberhard Jüngel), and lastly, the doctrine of the Trinity (Colin Gunton, Stanley Grenz). The two key issues of traditional theological anthropology are that of the *imago Dei* and sin. Cortez (2010:134) writes that if *imago Dei* is correctly interpreted, the focus is on the central role of Jesus Christ in the effort to understand humans. Cortez (2010:11) identifies other important issues for contemporary theological anthropology; namely the creation of humans and how this influences the meaning of being human; the uniqueness of humans in creation and our relationship with creation; the creation of gender types and the importance of human sexuality; what constitutes a human being in terms of the body/soul problem, and how that influences the way we live in this world; the issue of free will, and how that impacts on salvation and moral responsibility; personhood, and what the self means in the light of the way personal identity is formed and maintained; the individual and communal aspects of human life; the importance of race; and, finally, the way class and economic issues influence humanity.

Cortez (2010:93) feels very strongly that a Christian anthropology, when talking about the nature of humanity, should function within the parameters of seven key points as part of a biblical framework, and adhere to each of these points independently. These key points include Christocentrism (Jesus Christ as the starting point for a proper understanding of humanity and the implication of his incarnation and resurrection), relative uniqueness in creation, mystery (aspects of a human person will always evade understanding), relationality (sexuality as the way humans express relationality), responsibility (the causation of moral responsibility), embodiment (taking seriously the embodied nature of human life), and brokenness/sin. He refers to these as “*imago Dei* affirmations”. Ultimately, it is not only the question of “what” the human person is, but “who” the human person is. For Cortez (2010:136), this lies in the existence, partnership and relationship of humans through Jesus Christ.

Anderson (2004:82) discusses theological anthropology in the light of the image and likeness of God and according to the concept of self. He focuses on the issue of the meaning of a human soul, especially since contemporary science suggests that human personality can only manifest through the brain, even if the brain is not the “effective cause”. This leads to the question asked in theological anthropology, about what in essence makes humans unique. He compares the Hebrew use of the words flesh (*basar*), spirit (*ruach*) and life/soul (*nephesh*). *Nephesh* means life, *ruach* means a “vigorous or inspired life”; he writes that humans are not different from animals in that they have a soul, but because they have “the special orientation of the human soul/spirit life in relation to God” (Anderson 2004:83). He also concludes that a person cannot be fully defined as constituting a soul and body without thinking of the spirit as the essential core. Anderson (2004:85) writes that a biblical anthropology with a Christian view of the self must reject the strict differentiation between body and soul or any trichotomy between body, spirit and soul. Humans are not unique because they possess a soul and other animals do not. Their uniqueness lies in their openness towards God, as the source of life as “besouled bodies” and “embodied souls”. Referring to sin and the image of God, Anderson (2004:89) writes that in a theological anthropology, sin is the “failure to live humanly in every area of social, personal, sexual and spiritual life”, and that salvation then is the recovery of what it means to be human in all these dimensions of life. Human nature is defined as “creaturely life experienced as personal, social, sexual, and spiritual life under divine determination, judgement, and promise”. Tracing back humans to their origin is not the ultimate task in a theological anthropology. The image of God constitutes the self in a

theological anthropology. It is more than a religious aspect of the self, but it is the total self in what it is and what it can become.

In discussing ethical issues, Anderson (2004:92) views theological anthropology as the “underlying moral basis for ethical rules for living and dying”, with God upholding the ultimate value of life even though human life has “intrinsic and relative value”. It is a violation if life has to be lived only on a biological level; it is a violation if a person is forced to live in economic, social and political structures that compromise life as a gift from God. This is where a theological anthropology is “the positive moral basis for the liberation of human sexuality from degradation, oppression and exploitation”, since in Christ there is the promise to be freed from these limitations, through life that continues after death. Van den Brink and Van der Kooi (2012:261) also affirm the importance of sexuality, which is intimately connected to a positive appreciation of the human body within theological anthropology. They interpret sexual differentiation in terms of attachment and relationality, but argue that the complementarity between people can only be expressed in the primary and prototypical manner of a lasting attachment and solidarity of a heterosexual marriage (Van den Brink & Van der Kooi 2012:264).

Jürgen Moltmann anchors his discussion on the body/embodiment within an ecological doctrine of creation. If God is understood in a Trinitarian way as Father, Son and Spirit, it is no longer possible to interpret the relationship between God and the created world as “a one-sided relationship of dominion” (Moltmann 1985:2). It is much rather “an intricate relationship of community – many-layered, many faceted and at many levels”. This kind of theology is characterised by the basic notion of a “non-hierarchical, decentralized, confederate theology”. It is not a theology of entitlement where humans are supposed to rule of the world and subdue creation (Moltmann 1985:4). He interprets Western anthropology with the saying that “‘the wise soul’ is superior to ‘the foolish body’ which means “that the liberty of self-control grows in proportion to a person’s detachment from his own body” (Moltmann 1985:244). He continues that Western anthropology has nurtured the idea that one can detach oneself from the body and that the soul is far superior to the body. Moltmann (1985:259) propagates the idea that “the true human community is designed to be the *imago Trinitatis*”. This entails that the relationship between body and soul or in whichever way it is defined, is “a *perichoretic* relationship of mutual interpenetration and differentiated unity”, without any domination and without assuming that the one has primacy over the other. He

continues that theologians should look for “Gestalt” which he describes as “the configuration or total pattern – of lived life”. God is then not present only in the soul or reason or will, but God’s place is the total human being, “that historical Gestalt which people, body and soul, develop in their environment”. Moltmann (1985:221) holds that the complete existence of a human being makes him/her the image of God, and not some characteristic he/she possesses. He continues that it is not only the soul that reflects God’s image, but the whole person, “not only the individual; humanity as it is bound up with nature” constitutes the image of God. Jesus Christ is the “messianic *imago Dei*” and those who believe in Him, becomes the “*imago Christi*” (Moltmann 1985:226). Humans will consummate their process of “becoming” only when death is destroyed eschatologically and when their bodies are redeemed in a new creation, and in this way they shall fulfil their destiny as creatures created by God (Moltmann 1985:227).

Approaches to contemporary theological anthropology vary — from Wentzel van Huyssteen who works on the question of human uniqueness, human origin and personhood, Wesley Wildmann who in the light of neuroscience claims that “ultimacy is a causal source of religious experience”, and Nancey Murphy, who has developed a method where the unity of body and soul in a human person can be explained as non-reductive physicalism. There is also Barbour’s approach, which is based on process theology. In this view human life is “rooted in nature, finitude, creatureliness, and mortality”, but still possesses capabilities such as freedom, language and self-consciousness (Russel & Wegter-McNelly 2004:526). Genetic research has offered much data for theological anthropology to contemplate. Russel and Wegter-McNelly (2004:526) refer to the work of Ted Peters who has identified issues connecting genetics to theological assumptions about God, humans and evolution. Some of these link to the abortion controversy, genetic determinism and human freedom, the “gay gene” and “playing God” through genetic engineering. Peters refuses to see any part of creation or DNA as sacred, and views humanity as a “created co-creator”. We are creative as humans and the ethical challenge is how to align our endeavours with what God is creating.

In the following sections I explore contemporary theological anthropologies that incorporate the body/embodiment in a variety of ways.

5.1.1 The religious naturalist anthropology of Wesley Wildman

Wildman (2009:230) presents a contemporary theological anthropology which works with the hypothesis that the human being is *homo religious*. This for him implies that “we are oriented to primordial, ultimate mystery in our experiences, our social practices, our drives and projective impulses, our longings and failures, our malevolencies and love; and that we are so not only historically, culturally, or circumstantially, but also ontologically, essentially, and inescapably”. He evaluates this hypothesis against the Modern Secular Interpretation of Humanity (MSIH) and religious wisdom. He describes this viewpoint of theological anthropology as politically and religiously potent since it follows a religious naturalism and a careful challenge “to tear away the socially constructed and religiously maintained veils of ignorance that obscure full self-awareness” (Wildman 2009:231). In formulating his hypothesis, he investigates disciplines such as evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, cognitive neuroscience, psychology and sociology. He follows a religious naturalist approach. In doing so, Wildman (2009:18) is of the opinion that this creates the space to speak of religious experiences as “genuine events of encounter or engagement” and at the same time he views these religious behaviours and beliefs as true reactions to demands from society and to personal psychological needs. In contrast with traditional religious anthropologies, which link religious phenomena to sacred texts or divine commands, a religious naturalist who takes insights from the science of brains and bodies seriously, will look for explanations “in terms of body- and brain-based constraints on culturally specific explorations of a landscape of religious and spiritual possibilities”.

Talking about the cognitive science of our “imperfect brains”, Wildman (2009:112) is of the opinion that this will change the way religious anthropology interprets religious phenomena, especially with regard to the truth of religious beliefs. Religious groups tend to harbour superstition and incomplete evidence, which tends to be above criticism and which is presented as wisdom. It is in this context that the insights of cognitive science are suppressed and why Wildman (2009:114) describes religion as an enigma. Wildman (2009:117) continues to describe three domains in which human bodies are crucial for the comprehension of the human being as *homo religious*: sociality, where the brain facilitates social behaviours and the part bodies play in structuring social arrangements; morality, where bodies are regulated and intricate relationships are sustained with a great deal of corporate and individual religiosity; and religious and spiritual experiences. Bodies make religion possible

and inevitable. Wildman (2009:118) strikingly writes that “bodies influence the cognitive emotional shape that religion takes in individuals and the social and moral practices that religion manifests in groups”. Ultimately, spiritual and religious experiences are the result of a network of bodily functions, sensory and neurological roots with a wide range of social impacts (Wildman 2009:141).

5.1.2 Human uniqueness and personhood in the theological anthropology of Wentzel van Huyssteen

Wentzel van Huyssteen’s earlier work was in the field of methodology, but his recent work is concerned with the dialogue between theology and science within theological anthropology. This is the context in which he views his own work, characterised by its concern for interdisciplinary dialogue (Van Huyssteen 2010a:143). He continues that he has argued for a public theology where theology can assert a democratic presence in the conversation with other disciplines, in political and cross-contextual contexts, as well as in secular academia. The uniqueness of humans is one such topic where theology engages with other sciences in conversation. This shared interdisciplinary problem revolves around the question of what makes us human and whether this problem relates to human origins and the evolution of religious awareness or not (Van Huyssteen 2010a:145). He argues that any conversation about human uniqueness will always have a “moral dimension”, since humans as cultural creatures “have the remarkable but dangerous ability to determine whom we are going to include, or not, as part of ‘us’” (Van Huyssteen 2010a:146). He continues that as humans we have an intuitive comprehension that the elements that define us as uniquely human are notions such as self-awareness, language, consciousness, moral awareness, symbolic behaviour, imagination, and mythology. Yet, ironically, these notions are the least visible in prehistoric records. Van Huyssteen (2010a:147) argues that for theology to look responsibly at the notion of human uniqueness, it first has to depart “from esoteric and baroquely abstract notions of human uniqueness” and regard humanness as radically embodied where “our sexuality and embodied moral awareness are tied directly to our embodied self-transcendence as creatures who are predisposed to religious belief”. He continues that this embodied notion is directly linked to “the embodied, symbolizing minds of our prehistoric ancestors” as displayed in the Upper Palaeolithic cave paintings. He further argues that religious awareness and religious behaviour have always been included in the characteristics that mark human

uniqueness, and that there is “a naturalness to religious imagination” (Van Huyssteen 2010a:148).

In his book, *Alone in the world?* (2006), Van Huyssteen explored the question of human uniqueness in dialogue with paleoanthropology and archaeology and focussed on the meaning of prehistoric cave paintings. Van Huyssteen (2010a:147) writes that this enabled him to translate the problem of human uniqueness back to “a specific and radical reconstruction of a more embodied, moral, historical revisioning of the theological notion of the *image of God*”. *Imago Dei* is not an abstract concept. Van Huyssteen (2006a:320) writes that “...the image of God is not found in some intellectual or spiritual capacity, but in the whole embodied human being, ‘body and soul’. In fact, the image of God is not found in humans, but is the human, and for this reason *imago Dei* can be read only as *imitatio Dei*: to be created in God’s image means we should act like God, and so attain holiness by caring for others and for the world”. Traditional theology has always maintained a split between human and other creatures, with only human beings created in the image of God (Van Huyssteen 2010a:149). He continues this idea was justified by cognitive traits like human intelligence and rationality which “floated free above nature and the human body”. Theology, however, has to take note of the emergence of “cognitive fluidity” of the prehistoric human mind, since science, art and religion are deeply integrated in the cognitive fluidity of the human brain/mind. In an effort to appropriate this knowledge into theology, theology should rethink the notion of human uniqueness and its interpretation of the image of God (Van Huyssteen 2010a:149). He continues that the challenge for theology is to revisit the meaning of human uniqueness for the human person when the latter is described as “a being that has emerged biologically as a centre of self-awareness, identity, and moral responsibility”.

Such a conception of personhood (encompassing cognitive fluidity, symbolic propensities and embodied imagination) compels theology to rethink the notion of the image of God as a concept that does not make human creatures more valuable or superior to other creatures and earlier hominids (Van Huyssteen 2010a:150). He continues that this notion could rather express the “specific task and purpose to set forth the presence of God in this world”, a notion of *imago Dei* which recognises our intimate ties to the creaturely world and its uniqueness, as well as to our prehistoric ancestors. He writes that as human beings we are characterised by our embodied brain and its cognitive fluidity as expressed through language, imagination,

creativity and symbolic behaviour, as well as by our “hostility, arrogance, ruthlessness, and cunning”; we are, therefore trapped between good and evil (Van Huyssteen 2010a:150).

He continues that the more encompassing question for theological anthropology is how Darwinian evolution affects theological anthropology around the issue of a human person and whether an interdisciplinary conversation of selfhood could contribute to “move from fragmented notions of self to more holistic, integrated notions of personhood”. Van Huyssteen (2010b:329) wants to establish whether human evolution can present crucial links to theological anthropology. Van Huyssteen (2010a:151) aspires to follow the evolution of morality, sexuality, language, music and religious disposition, arguing that the ability to walk upright (bipedalism) shaped the evolution of sexuality, cognition and proto-morality, and that with the inter-connectedness to our human minds, “the evolution of our linguistic, aesthetic, and religious disposition were also firmly embedded in our human bodies”. He continues that this enables a holistic approach to an embodied self and opens new questions for theological anthropology.

Van Huyssteen (2010b:342) writes that “embodied specificity” bears a direct link to a theological interpretation of human uniqueness. He continues to expand this “embodied specificity”, writing that “as *animals*, rather than plants, we are mobile and perceptual. As *vertebrates* distinguished from non-vertebrates, we have a back-bone...As *mammals*, we are warm-blooded, live-bearing, and nurse our young...we share many physiological, genetic, and even behavioural features with *primates*. As the one remaining hominid on the planet, we have erect posture and are bipedal”. All of this culminates in the fact that “*human specificity is the specificity of a species*” and that selfhood can in no way be defined as “an abstract, intellectual or spiritual capacity” since it is concrete and bodily (Van Huyssteen 2010b:342). He writes that no single trait can capture the notion of human uniqueness, but as humans we do have a set of capacities that makes us unique and distinguishes us from other creatures on earth (Van Huyssteen 2010b:344).

He continues that through an interdisciplinary approach, he endeavours to comprehend the “theological relevance of our own species’ specificity” through “a descriptive anthropology of human personhood”. He also explores the evolution of morality and concludes that the evolution of our moral sense does not explain how we construct laws, codes and moral decisions (Van Huyssteen 2010b:347). He continues that the evolution of religion is closely

linked to the evolution of morality. Contemporary research attempts to explain “why symbolic religious behaviour occurred in societies at every stage of development and in every region of the world”, and he writes that religion does reveal the hallmarks of evolved behaviour (Van Huyssteen 2010b:348). He refers to the words of Nicolas Wade writing that “religion is universal because it was wired into our neural circuitry before the ancestral human population dispersed from the African homeland”, and asks the provocative question that if evolution has shaped our body, why not entertain the notion that it has shaped the mind too?

The ultimate question he would endeavour to answer is whether an interdisciplinary conversation with sciences makes “intelligible the kind of person/self that Jesus was” and if the notion of an integrated self can contribute to the reconstruction or discovery of “healthy and integrated notions of personhood” (Van Huyssteen 2010a:152). He continues that if revelation of God is embodied in Jesus and in the history of Jesus, then there cannot be any interpretation of Christ that could claim final knowledge of God. He furthermore argues that “a more embodied theology that takes seriously our own evolution of our ideas about God and Christ will be able to embrace fully...the incarnational nature not only of Christ, but of the Christian faith itself”. Van Huyssteen (2010a:157) aspires to rethink “Jesus of Nazareth’s remarkable consciousness of God” in a holistic and embodied way and hopefully reimagines the personhood of Jesus in scientific and theological terms.

Van Huyssteen and Wiebe (2011:10) write that the problem of personhood or self is shaped by various efforts “to find different ways of balancing and connecting notions of multiple, narrative selves with ‘being a body’ and the central importance of being one’s own flesh”. This is one of the reasons for the rise in intensity in interdisciplinary dialogue on the notion of personhood, consciousness, imagination, soul and self-awareness.

5.1.3 Nonreductive physicalism in the theological anthropology of Nancey Murphy

Looking within Christian theology, cognitive neuroscience and philosophy, Nancey Murphy (2006:ix) is of the opinion that there is no additional metaphysical element to the body such as a mind, soul or spirit. We are our bodies. Murphy (2006:37) maintains that biblical teachings based on dualism have been a result of poor translation, and that there is no clear teaching on the metaphysical make-up of a person. In spite of this, throughout Christian

history, Christians lived with the dualism between body and soul, mainly as a result of cultural influences. She is of the opinion that a physicalist anthropology can lead to the reformulation of theology and that this can only improve our relationship with God, with Earth and its inhabitants. Such a “physicalist” standpoint does not negate that we are intelligent, moral and spiritual. She continues that “we are, at our best, complex physical organisms, imbued with the legacy of thousands of years of culture, and, most importantly, blown by the Breath of God’s Spirit, we are *Spirited bodies*”. Murphy (2006:69-70) writes that both biblical studies and neuroscience point towards a “physicalist account of the person”, meaning that humans are not a mixture of matter and non-matter, but are purely physical organisms. This does not mean that any higher human capacities are nothing but brain function. She uses the term “nonreductive physicalism” to explain that if there is no soul, then these higher human capacities can be explained in another way. “*In part* they are explainable as brain functions, but their *full* explanation requires attention to human social relations, to cultural factors, and, most importantly, to our relationship with God.”

Murphy (2006:109-110) argues that our behaviour in achieving certain goals for example rationality, morality and freedom, is directed by brain processes “enhanced by symbolic language, and engaged in social interaction”. This provided us with capabilities far greater than any other animal. Murphy (2006:146) writes that the notion of soul was at first conceptualised in an effort to explain the human’s capacities for reason, morality, spirituality, and free will. By saying that the concept of soul is unnecessary, she does not abandon the idea that we have higher human capacities, “but rather open ourselves to wonder at the fact that creatures made of dust of the ground have been raised so high”. Murphy (2010:79) argues that the critical debate currently is not so much about the body-soul dualism, but rather between reductionists and anti-reductionists. She believes that this is a crucial issue for theologians: “if religious experience is merely a function of aberrant brain processes, if humans have no genuine free will, if morality is merely in our genes, then there is indeed no way to make sense of traditional accounts of human nature”. She questions the view by modern scientists that “all causation is bottom-up (causal reductionism) and all physical processes are deterministic because the ultimate causal players (the atoms) obey deterministic laws” which implies that “the determinism at the bottom of the hierarchy of the sciences is transmitted to all higher levels” (Murphy 2010:95). She acknowledges that “bottom-up determinism” is dominant in the world, but emphatically states that it is not the complete story. She proposes that components of systems are influenced by their relationships within

the whole, that “dynamic systems are often the source of their own changes”, that while some components act deterministically, others are affected by “genuine quantum-level indeterminacy” and that some systems “are causes in their own right”. This points to the emergence of “higher-level systems that exercise downward influences (or constraints) on their own components” (Murphy 2010:96). Her stance counters a reductionist view of humans as purely physical beings, where the brain plays the former role of the soul or mind and where all behaviour and thought is determined by laws or neurobiology. She writes that “this does not immediately resolve the theological problem of divine action in human life, but I believe it makes it a more tractable problem than the ever mysterious action of God in the soul” (Murphy 2010:96).

Murphy (2006:147) concludes that “...our status as embodied creatures in no way contradicts the fact of our sociality; it does not undermine our ability to attain the highest heights of our reflective thought, or our capacity to be sustained by deep emotions and motivations”. Brown (1998:227-228) writes that with a physicalist view, the spiritual, physical and mental cannot be separated. This means, for example, that it is important to mental and spiritual health (what I eat and drink and one’s mental state has physical and spiritual affects). The understanding of human nature is possible, since human beings are viewed as a whole, undivided and “no part of human behaviour or experience is *prima facie* expected as nonmaterial and thus unobservable in principle”. Murphy (2002:vii) writes that in this century, there is a gradual replacement of a dualistic interpretation of a person by a holistic, physicalist account of the person. Murphy (2006:141) referred to “bodily identity” to explain that a person’s identity will be understood in terms of the person’s own body. The openness to insights from other disciplines further enhanced this “holistic” account and importance of bodiliness.

5.1.4 The relational theological anthropology of Fount LeRon Shults

What John Calvin did not address in his “*Institutes of Christian Religion*” (1559) was the way in which our knowledge of self and of God is mediated through our relations with other people. This is how LeRon Shults (2003:1) introduces his relational theological anthropology, writing that “the search for self-understanding in relation to the divine ‘Other’ cannot be divorced from a trembling fascination with the human ‘other’”. He holds the opinion that modern theological anthropology should explore the social and psychological

relations we have with other persons within the “physical and cultural relations that compose the matrices within which our lives are dynamically embedded” (LeRon Shults 2003: 2). He continues that people struggle to be wise, good and free within their communal relations. He advocates a reforming and reformative theological anthropology where each generation has the task to interpret the power of the gospel through dialogue with “contemporary philosophical and scientific interpretations of the world within the living, dynamic biblical tradition” (LeRon Shults 2003:5). He develops his relational theological anthropology in the middle-ground between the extremes of absolutism (what he calls a paleo-constructive response of fundamentalism) and relativism (the deconstructive response of pure liberalism). He describes his position in the middle-ground as the “reconstructive response of late modernity” which is “at once more interesting and more difficult to navigate” (LeRon Shults 2003:7). He developed his reconstructive response in his previous book, *The postfoundationalist task of theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the new theological rationality* (1999). The aim of his relational theological anthropology is then to reconstruct the traditional loci of theological anthropology (the doctrines of human nature, sin and the *imago Dei*) based on the challenges of late modernity (LeRon Shults 2003:xii).

He first sets out to explore the philosophical turn to relationality (from Aristotle to Kant; from Hegel to Levinas); then the link between relationality and developmental psychology; pedagogical practice and relationality (transformative learning in theological perspective); relationality and spiritual transformation; anthropology and the regulative relationality in Schleiermacher; anthropology and constitutive relationality in Barth and Pannenberg; and anthropology and the *Anhypostasis-Enhypostasis* formula in Christology. Then he puts forward his proposals for a reforming theological anthropology: relationality and the doctrine of human nature; relationality and the doctrine of sin; and relationality and the doctrine of *imago Dei*. It is under his proposals for reconstructing the doctrine of human nature that he discusses the relation between body and soul under the heading of “substance dualism and faculty psychology”. He is of the opinion that the definitions of human nature in Western theological anthropology have been so profoundly influenced by ancient and modern models of human nature that “many Christians believe they are essential to the biblical gospel” (LeRon Shults 2003:166).

These definitions of human nature have been led by the question how the “substance” of body and the “substance” of soul are related in a human, how they constitute personal

identity, and how the “faculties” of the soul work together to control the body (LeRon Shults 2003:165). Reformation theology has been influenced by the tension between the Platonic and Aristotelian anthropological models where the former argues for a strong dualism between the mortal body and the immortal soul and the latter views the soul as the form of the body which means that the two substances cannot easily be separated (LeRon Shults 2003:168).

In general, Calvin leaned more towards Platonic dualism while Luther was more interested in the Aristotelian interpretation and emphasised a real union between body and soul (LeRon Shults 2003:169). He continues that while both Calvin and Luther “spoke of the two substances of body and soul (with its faculties)...they were more focussed than many of their predecessors on the relation of the whole person to God”. The point that LeRon Shults (2003:172) wants to make is that the notion of human uniqueness in Christian tradition was formed by philosophical discussions regarding the quantity and quality of substances of human individuals and “the number and hierarchical ordering of the faculties of the soul”. The turn to relationality in philosophy and science (for example neurobiology) provides a new prospect to reconstruct the holistic anthropology of biblical tradition (LeRon Shults 2003:185). He argues that the theological acceptance of the body/soul dualism happened under pressure to salvage the Christian notion of salvation after death. This derived from the distinction between substances and accidents, prevalent during the patristic and early modern periods, which, in turn “led to an inner/outer anthropological dichotomy and a spirit/matter cosmological dichotomy” (LeRon Shults 2003:188). He continues that if the “goal of salvation is essentially relational” and if the eternal life is “an intensification of creaturely sharing in this knowledge”, then Christian soteriology should avoid the substance categories as introduced by the Platonic and Aristotelian anthropological models.

The focus in LeRon Shults’ book, *Christology and Science* (2008) is on reforming Christology. He discusses incarnation and evolutionary biology, atonement and cultural anthropology, as well as parousia and physical cosmology. He writes that “theology, science and philosophy all search for ways of making sense of the human experience of life in the cosmos, often shaping each other in ways that are not immediately obvious”, and places his focus on “the interwoven dynamics of this reciprocity” (LeRon Shults 2008:4). He writes that one of the categories that shape theological conversations on the personhood of Christ as well as scientific conversations of human personhood is that of body and soul (LeRon Shults

2008:31). The question for both fields of enquiry is how these two substances could be related to one another in the same person. In the Christological debate the assumption has been made that the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ resembles the relation between body and soul in the human person and in this way Christology was shaped by anthropology and generally accepted (LeRon Shults 2008:32). The Reformed theologians did not challenge this anthropological analogy and accepted “the basic contours of faculty psychology, in which the soul is understood to rule the body through the powers of *intellect* and *will*”, and this continued to structure pronouncements regarding the doctrine of the incarnation. LeRon Shults (2008:35) continues that where Cartesian anthropology made a sharp distinction between “soulish powers and the body”, the science of neurobiology has indicated that human cognition is profoundly dependent upon the neural and electro-chemical functions of the brain. He refers to the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio writing that “what we once called the faculties of the soul are now explained as registers of the whole human organism whose mental functioning emerges out of brain processes embedded within a feeling body” (LeRon Shults 2008:36). He continues that this, however, does not deny the notion of human personhood or reject the idea of self through reductionist thinking. The body and emotions are crucial in the assembly of consciousness and it is possible to construct “a neuroscientific understanding of the self that attends to the way in which the relations between neurons enbrained within the body can map both object and self *and* the relationships they hold” (LeRon Shults 2008:36). This holistic and relational notion of personhood challenges the previously held interpretations on the connection between body and soul, and makes new ways possible of expressing “the intuition that God was truly made known in the life of Jesus Christ, who was truly a member of our species”.

LeRon Shults (2008:41) also refers to the findings of paleobiology (as a subdiscipline of evolutionary biology) which investigates the origin of humanity. It incorporates the discoveries of the Darwinian evolution, as well as the insights from neuroscience and applies it to “the narrower issue of the role of developments in the brain (and body) of *Homo sapiens* that contributed to the characteristics that distinguishes it from other hominid species”. He continues that the interesting part for theological anthropology, is the emergence of religious behaviour (which manifested alongside toolmaking and artistic expression) and “the intense human desire to understand our place in the cosmos”. LeRon Shults (2008:43) writes that a challenge for theology would be to find new ways of expressing the doctrine of incarnation with regard to “this new evolutionary understanding of human ‘flesh’”. The challenge is to

widen the theological discussion on Christology by engaging in the “ongoing human struggle to make sense of noetic desire that shapes the religious (and artistic and scientific) dimensions of human becoming” (LeRon Shults 2008:44).

LeRon Shults (2008:63) also brings theological insights on the atoning work of Jesus Christ into conversation with the social and cultural dimensions of human life. He traces the shifts in the development of atonement theories and cultural anthropology to reconstruct “our articulation of the claim that Jesus Christ manifests the omnipotent justifying agency of God, calling us to participate with our neighbours in the redemptive power of divine love”. While social scientist are endeavouring to understand the structures and functions of human acting within specific cultures and how ethical systems guide human agency, theologians are more interested in “the ultimate origin, condition and goal of human acting vis-à-vis the interpreted experience of divine action” (LeRon Shults 2008:64). Scientist in general do not ask the question whether an object is truly good, but the interest in interdisciplinary conversation has spurred more scientist to enter into the “philosophical space” of theology and ethics in “exploring possibilities for transforming (not merely interpreting) structures that unjustly divide societies by race, class and gender” and in doing so reflect on the criteria supporting “the longing for the good life that structures human agency”, a longing which LeRon Shults (2008:65) calls “moral desire”. He continues that theologians want to understand this concept in relation to the specific conception of divine justice. He writes that a more holistic and relational approach to atonement theory can contribute to formulate questions in a new way. “How does Jesus Christ’s life of love manifest the justifying agency of God?” (LeRon Shults 2008:66). He concludes that “as we struggle in our attempts to pursue the good life together within our overlapping and often conflicting cultures and religious traditions, presentations of the doctrine of atonement may contribute by re-presenting other-regarding forms of agency that testify to and demonstrate Jesus’ way of acting in the world” (LeRon Shults 2008:107).

5.1.5. The African christo-theological anthropology of Andrea Ng’wesheni

The Tanzanian theologian, Andrea Ng’wesheni expounds a post-colonial theological anthropology within the context of sub-Saharan Africa which he describes as a reality that is based on a distorted identity which is at the root of poverty, self-alienation, joblessness and even death (Ng’wesheni 2002:2). In his theological anthropology he explores the relevance of Christology to anthropology in an African context with a focus on “concrete human life

experience” in a specific political, socio-economic and religio-cultural context. The second focus is on the contribution of social and behavioural sciences with their keen interest in the human person (Ng’wesheni 2002:3). He continues that “the Christ symbol plays the role of shaping the conception of the human” since the incarnation of the Word of God carries the possibility of humanity and of human nature. In this sense, Jesus Christ as God-man is the paradigm of the human person, “the embodiment of authentic humanity” and the archetype to which humanity should conform. Ng’wesheni (2002:5) then investigates the christological foundations of theological anthropology in the work of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner also with the aim to indicate that their christological approach should take the African ethos seriously if it wants to function in an African context.

He explores the notion of ‘ubuntu’ as expounded in chapter 1 under “Philosophy: African notions of Personhood” and then identifies five categories which encompass the African religious worldview: God as the originator and sustenance of all life; spirits (nature spirits, ancestors, clan founders and superhuman beings); spirits of long deceased people; human beings (alive and still to be born); plants and animals and then objects and phenomena without biological life (Ng’wesheni 2002:10). God is the genesis of all life and the ancestors transmit this life to living persons and that is why it is crucial to safeguard this life by maintaining order in the world. The notion of ‘ubuntu’ captures the idea of the human being as “a living force among other forces in the universe”. It is this notion of personhood that is central in African thought (Ng’wesheni 2002:15). He continues that one becomes human not merely by birth, but through a gradual process of integration in society.

It is this African notion of humanity that has been altered through Christian missionaries (e.g. denying that ancestral spirits have any relation with living persons); through racism and colonialism (e.g. superimposing their social order on the already existing order and economically subjugating the colonised people) and through neo-colonialism (the dominant foreign intervention over a nominally independent nation through economic structures) which maintains financial and economic dependency (Ng’wesheni 2002:58). He speaks of “anthropological pauperization” whereby human beings “are deprived of their identity, their dignity, and all other essential rights that would make them more human”, an anthropology that does not affirm the goodness and value of a person. He describes this poverty as a threat to human life and humanity (Ng’wesheni 2002:61).

Ng'wesheni (2002:67) writes that it is unrealistic to think that the African story can be reclaimed through the wisdom in traditional Africa that could be “rediscovered and covered and fostered”. He acknowledges that it is rich in values, but it cannot be used to hide from the hostile present. Ng'wesheni (2002:70) refers to Ezukwe who suggest that modernity can be acquired by Africans in a way that enhances their own purposes and by adopting relevant techno-scientific achievements of the West into African contexts. He then investigates past ideas that were developed to reclaim African identity and dignity, like the African socialism of Julius Nyerere; the Zambian humanism of Kenneth Kaunda; African theology with its synthesis between religion, African culture and Christianity and African liberation theology with its efforts to build a free and humane society. Its starting point is the concrete human person in a concrete historical context, enabling the Christian narrative to be understood in a practical way (Ng'wesheni 2002:89).

It is within these historical contexts that Christ is portrayed as a symbol of the worth and dignity of human beings, demonstrating God's love and concern for humans. Ng'wesheni (2002:119) writes that “when a section of humankind is denied its humanity and humanness, Jesus calls for rehumanization” which begins in the concrete contexts of humans' lives. He continues that the contact point between God and humans is the political, socio-economic and religio-cultural life of human communities. In exploring the christologies of Rahner and Barth, he concludes that human uniqueness for both theologians lies in the worth and dignity conferred on them by God. Through Jesus, a human person remains God's valued creature and the possibility of humanity is inferred from the humanity of Jesus Christ (Ng'wesheni 2002:140). He continues that all that dehumanise, oppress, exploit and alienate human beings are challenged by this implicit reference to God. Ng'wesheni (2002:146) describes Barth's emphasis on the divinity of Christ and the neglect of Jesus the historical man as one of the shortcomings of Barth's christological exposition writing that “the Jesus of Barth has nothing to do with his own historical context”. Rahner on the other side puts too much emphasis on individuality in his transcendental theology, primarily portraying the human being as an individual seeking fulfilment in God, away from human community (Ng'wesheni 2002:149). In Western culture, the “individual alone defines the self, the person one is to become” without any need to rely on spiritual and social resources (Ng'wesheni 2002:150).

A christo-theological anthropology in Africa recognises community as the basis for defining humanity. It is within this community that Jesus demands “recognition of authentic

existence” where persons can become fully human (Ng’wesheni 2002:151). In an African christo-theological anthropology, Jesus is also the ‘Proto-ancestor’ who brings “the ideal of an ancestor to its fulfilment and completion”. It is Christ who gives the strength to guard moral life, asking others to follow his example and to struggle against “all that dehumanizes human beings” and in this way, strengthening the life force of the community (Ng’wesheni 2002:156). Jesus is also the Liberator who brings life in full and restores human dignity through the incarnation. It is the incarnation that demonstrates God’s involvement in human history, whereby God identifies with the suffering of humans. Ng’wesheni (2002:159) writes that it is as ‘Liberator-Brother’ that Jesus wants to reverse the dehumanisation of humanity from the inside out. It is as member of the African community that Jesus liberates African humanity, “willing to die so that they can become more human” (Ng’wesheni 2002:160).

While the body/embodiment features in these theological anthropologies and the corporeal turn is incorporated to various degrees within each of them, the deeper enquiry is for a theological anthropology that consistently takes the body seriously as an organising principle. The quest is for a theological anthropology that has a profound sentiment of the flesh. Such a contemporary theological anthropology is that of David H. Kelsey’s, who served as a member of the Yale Divinity School till his retirement in 2005. In 2009, he published his monumental 1067-page book, titled *Eccentric existence: a theological anthropology*. I first provide a brief overview of his theological anthropology and then focus on the aspects of his theological anthropology that deal specifically with the human body.

5.2. A brief overview of David Kelsey’s theological anthropology

David Kelsey (2009:7) describes Christian theological anthropology as “the point at which Christian and secular thought most easily and immediately engage each other in the service and also practices within the common life of pluralistic culture”. Christian theology had a profound albeit sometimes anonymous impact on modern culture through its anthropological ideas. He regards anthropology as “the most exciting theological topic” since this is where theology has the most direct bearing on practical life. Kelsey (2009:6) is of the opinion that theological anthropology may be articulated in “intertraditional conversation”, a dialogue not only with anthropological wisdom, but also with different religious traditions as well as appropriate sciences. He describes it as “an exercise in conceptual bridge-building” with “strategically selected secular conversation partners” (Kelsey 2009:7). Kelsey seems to be

more than capable of engaging partners from other religious traditions and academic disciplines in conversation, but he deliberately abandoned this endeavour; his work focuses on the “theological end of the bridge” instead. He suggests that this is necessary before he can attempt to build a bridge with other interdisciplinary and interreligious partners. He realises that he has a greater awareness of the anthropological wisdom of specific “atheological conversation partners” than the content of Christian anthropological wisdom (Kelsey 2009:7).

He makes the contextuality of his theological anthropology quite clear. His thoughts are founded in Christian traditions and practices that originated in the New Testament and patristic writings. It was formed by the Reformation in Switzerland and Scotland, by the Enlightenment and by the religious revivals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in America. At the same time, as a North American Presbyterian, his anthropological questions are also shaped by traditions and ideas he shares with other “middle-class, well-educated males in a late-capitalist, consumerist society” (Kelsey 2009:6).

His theological anthropology is not “an anthropocentric moralizing of theological anthropology” (Kelsey 2009:118). In trying to answer questions about the logic of coming to faith and of Christian beliefs about humans, many theological anthropologies systematically attempt to answer these questions by focussing on the interests of human beings. These interests, including living a meaningful and authentic life, free of despair, are appropriate. The problem is that beliefs about nonhuman realities are marginalised or flatly ignored. Kelsey continues to call such theological anthropologies “dangerous to the entire living web of creatures, human and nonhuman”. The recognition of sin and overcoming it through redemption is a crucial existential question in theological anthropology. Christian anthropologies are often systematically structured by the concept of sin and humans as “morally responsible agents”, and by the practical problem of how humans can become morally acceptable and overcome sin. When this question becomes the organising principle, it presents a methodological problem for Kelsey since “the content of the anthropology is systematically anthropocentric in that it is exhaustively concerned with human failure, an exclusively intrahuman defect or distortion (sin) that is in need of correction”. God then relates to humans based on their moral values as moral agents and God is supposed to save them when their worth is that of sinners. This is in conflict with the belief that Christian faith is founded on “God’s free, wise and generative love” and not on any concept of humans’

moral value (Kelsey 2009:119). He continues that it is ironic that one cannot avoid moralising or moralistically distorting concepts of faith and unfaith, sin and salvation because sin and reconciliation are of such fundamental importance to the logic of Christian beliefs. He does, however, try to steer away from “an anthropocentric view of the value of nonhuman beings”, and what it implies for appropriate relations between humans and nonhumans, and from “an anthropocentric moralizing of accounts of Christian beliefs about human beings”.

5.2.1 *Desiderata* for a contemporary theological anthropology

Kelsey (2009:35) holds it as “unintelligible” that there was a pair such as Adam and Eve who were created *ex nihilo* as fully functioning human beings without any living antecedents as it is expressed in premodern theological proposals. There has never been a period in human history where the survival of humans did not entail hard labour, the painful birth of children and the immanence of death. He continues that “it is no longer believable that a unique fall ever happened to anyone like Adam and Eve”, especially viewed in the light of evolution and origin of every living species. He sets out *desiderata* for a contemporary theological anthropology, one being that humans are presented in such a way that is “recognizable to contemporary readers” as actual personal beings. They should also be recognisable in the way in which this concept of humans is portrayed in psychology as “persons”. This conceptuality can be used to demonstrate the theological claim that humans can never demand or earn their salvation from God. Such a conceptuality holds firm that no theological anthropology can depend on the historicity of the first human couple and the Fall.

Such a contemporary theological anthropology should also emphasise that “human creatures are bodily public agents” (Kelsey 2009:35), but with a *desideratum* which comprises a way to base the value of humans (who they are) not in contrast or comparison with other “lesser” creatures or in dualism between human beings’ “mental” and “physical” capabilities (Kelsey 2009:31). In trying to understand the human being, premodern theological proposals viewed humans as part of a larger and good cosmos, public agents who were finitely free, self-directing with a two-folded purpose: to be caretakers of the well-being of other creatures, and to have close communion with God (Kelsey 2009:30). Such theological anthropologies placed all creatures on “a continuum of degrees of values”. The dilemma with this “value anthropocentrism” is that human self-interest with the desire to exploit is in conflict with human stewardship without any theological resistance. Humans are also portrayed as

possessing a “body” and “rational soul” often in contrast with each other. The internal logic of premodern proposals is that the soul has higher value than the body since the “image of God” (based on Genesis 1-3) is located in the soul. The body with its desires tends to distract the soul from its double purpose, so that it fails to relate appropriately to God and other creatures. Kelsey (2009:31) continues that despite premodern theological anthropologies’ “vigorous affirmation of the goodness of all creation including the human body, the familiar critique seems accurate that their internal logic entails suspicion, fear, and disparagement of the body”. Kelsey (2009:41) casts the *desiderata*, which a contemporary theological anthropology should try to satisfy, into three categories: thematic, systematic and conceptual. Conceptually, a contemporary theological anthropology should strive to formulate its proposals in such a way that humans are recognised as personal, but in a different way to psychological descriptions of human beings. Desirably, it should also be done in a way that conceptually can accommodate contemporary scientific and scriptural research about human beings. Thematically, it should be theocentric and portray humans as “bodily public agents in community”. Systematically, it is desirable that a contemporary theological anthropology is not based on any idea of Adam and Eve as historical figures or on the Fall as an historic event. Such an anthropology should not rely on proposals based on comparisons or contrasts with other creatures or between certain human traits. It has a “secondary dependent status” on basic theological claims about ways in which “God relates to all that is not God”.

5.2.2 The root question for his Christian theological anthropology

In his monumental book, *Eccentric existence: a theological anthropology*, David Kelsey (2009:8) formulates the root question for his Christian theological anthropology as follows: “What is implied about human being by the claim that God actively relates to us to create, to draw us to eschatological consummation, and to reconcile us when we have become estranged from God?” This root question relates to the anthropological questions: “What are we?”, “Who are we?” and “How ought we to be?” In turn these questions are framed in Christian background beliefs about our proximate and ultimate contexts. In brief, Kelsey (2009:4) asks his anthropological questions against the beliefs about the character of the “proximate contexts”, the physical and social world we live in whereas the “ultimate context” is the most fundamental and significant to what, how and who we are. He describes the proximate and ultimate contexts as “deep parts of our personal identities”, and these beliefs in the reality of God and how God actively relates to us, constitute our ultimate context and

cannot be changed easily (Kelsey 2009:5). We are ultimately defined as creatures in the active creativity of God although what and who we are and how we are to be are shaped by the created cosmos, the proximate contexts into which we are born (Kelsey 2009:162). This created proximate context “is humankind’s lived world in its concrete everydayness” and it is in this everydayness that its dignity lies (Kelsey 2009:191). This quotidian is socially constructed, made up of societies with their unique cultures and traditions, handed down from generation to generation and “because it is always historical, and because history is diverse, the quotidian manifests remarkable diversity” (Kelsey 2009:192). He continues that all these factors contribute to the concreteness of the proximate context and to the “everyday that God creates”. It is, however, an “everyday” that is profoundly deformed by evil. Kelsey (2009:193) points out that there is no theological motivation to idealise this quotidian and that his commitment to canonical Wisdom’s creation theology is not a commitment to “nostalgic idealizing of the world”. Humans have a vocation to be wise in their practices for the well-being of the quotidian and themselves.

Kelsey (2009:194) describes three types of practices in which humans are called to be wise: the way they interact with other humans, the way they interact with social institutions and the way in which humans interact with nonhuman creatures. Wisdom literature puts extraordinary focus on the correct use of language, exposing a normative connection between the way language is used in complex practices. He continues that this connection underscores crucial points in theological anthropology. “As integral parts of God’s creaturely quotidian, understood as networks of practices, human creatures are above all social, intentional bodied enactors of complex, cooperative practices that necessarily include practices of language use.” (Kelsey 2009:199). He continues that language used as integral part of wise practices entails the use of language in a manner which is true to the persons cooperating in the practice, true to the “nature and purpose of the relevant practice”, and corresponding to the “realities of the larger public context”. Language is then not used in a deceitful and false way. Kelsey (2009:199) boldly sums it up: “If the quotidian is what God creates, distorting the practice is to deform creation.”

5.2.3 The proximate context

This quotidian into which we are born, is finite and that implies that “creaturely being is limited being” (Kelsey 2009:201). Every creature in this proximate context is limited in

being. We live on borrowed breath. Kelsey (2009:202) continues that one of the implications of “the finitude of creatures” is that this proximate context is “inherently ambiguous” in the way we experience it. This quotidian holds the potential of the “possibility of our well-being” as humans. At the same time it holds the potential of pain, loss and death. He writes that “on the pleasure-pain axis, that which God creates is profoundly ambiguous to us experientially”. That does not mean that God is indifferent to his creation. God creates us and this quotidian as finite physical reality, which also implies that any creaturely change, the destruction of creatures included, is “precisely the mode God’s ongoing creativity takes” (Kelsey 2009:203). The “perfect”, “real” and “authentic” human for Kelsey (2009:204) is then “the ordinary everyday human person”. This means that the notion of a “perfect or the perfect actualized human being”, the person that lacks nothing with regard to personhood can be abandoned on theological grounds. The way in which Kelsey develops the description of the quotidian in his theological anthropology undermines the “absolutist’s pictures of human perfection” (Kelsey 2009:207). He continues that the real human is “God’s good creature precisely in his or her quotidian everydayness and finitude, and not because they satisfy some one, universally applicable, ideal of a human person completely — that is, ‘perfectly’, actualized in all aspects”.

Kelsey (2009:5) writes that it is important that in the majority of Christian traditions the God who relates to us is the Triune God. This implies that our proximate contexts are not only “nature and culture”, but is understood as creation; it is not only about the meaningful use of time, but about “promising and promissory history”; it is not merely about moral responsibility, but also about reconciliation. Kelsey (2009:121) writes that it is crucial for theological anthropology that humans should be understood within their proximate and ultimate contexts since “the triune God’s active relating to them simply is humankind’s ultimate context, while the outcomes of that relating define their proximate contexts”. Kelsey’s aim is not primarily to defend Trinitarian doctrine, but to show methodological and substantive implications for theological anthropology. Methodologically it is important to understand that Trinitarian understanding was rooted in the practice of Christian communities, essential to their interpretation of stories in the bible of God relating to humans. God has distinct ways of relating to all that is not God: relating to create, relating to draw it to eschatological consummation, and relating to reconcile (Kelsey 2009:78). God relating to create takes a logical precedence over the other two, but God relating to reconcile in Christ portrays a proper christocentric understanding of the Triune God, even if indirectly. The

substantive implication for theological anthropology is the realisation that an understanding of the Triune God was rooted in the worship practices of Christian communities where Trinitarian formulas were used. By “worship” Kelsey refers broadly to the practices in the life of Christian communities as an appropriate response to God’s relating to them. Kelsey (2009:79) describes Christians relating to God as trusting the story of God relating to reconcile them, who characterised themselves as “the adopted children of God to whom God relates in dynamic and generative ways analogous to parents’ relations to their children”.

5.2.4 Eccentric human existence in the Triune God

There is a certain “axis” (pattern), an asymmetry to God’s relating. Kelsey (2009:121) describes the three hypostases of the Triune God as “begotten” from nothing, “begotten” eternally and the third hypostasis as “breathed out”. They are “co-equal and reciprocally encompass each other”, and when God relates to all creatures, it is this divine life that engages all that is not God. It is the Triune God who creates, and not only the Father; it is the Triune God who draws to eschatological consummation, and not only the Spirit; and it is the Triune God who reconciles, and not only the Son. In creating, it is the Father who creates through the Son in the power of the Spirit (Kelsey 2009:122). The Son is the self-expression of God and the proximate contexts of humans, and humans in these contexts are in their own way “God’s self-expression of God’s glory, incomprehensibility and holiness” (Kelsey 2009:124). It is the Spirit, sent by the Father with the Son, who draws humans to eschatological consummation (Kelsey 2009:126); and it is the Son, sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit who reconciles (Kelsey 2009:128). The Triune God not only reconciles to overcome the profound estrangement of humans because of “some deep deformity”, but also to empower a “deep and enlivening transformation” of humans in community. This is not only powerful, but “wisely powerful”, since it enables creatures to flourish (Kelsey 2009:129). He stresses that there is no “single, simple Christian metanarrative” that can be told about God’s relating to all that is not God or what humans can be. Humans in all their capacity for deep distortions and holiness are too mysterious to be captured in one, single Christian anthropological metatheory which can make truth claims about them (Kelsey 2009:131).

In an existential orientation to their proximate and ultimate contexts and with regard to their identity, being, value and destiny, human existence is centered outside itself in the Triune God. Human existence is eccentric and that is what Kelsey portrays in the three parts of this

theological anthropology (Kelsey 2009:893). He then makes use of the image of a triple helix to portray the overall formal structure of human existence. It is, however, not shaped around a cone which moves to a point and some kind of definite conclusion, but is open-ended. Therefore, a cylindrical helix is more suitable to describe the movement of the three parts of his theological anthropology (Kelsey 2009:898). It is even a bit more complex than that. The two sets of canonical stories (part 2 and 3) centre around the Triune God relating to humans in Jesus of Nazareth, and have their own “distinctive internal logic”.

The narrative logic of the story of God relating to humans to draw them to eschatological consummation does not presume that humans are in need of reconciliation because of their alienation. However, the narrative logic of the stories about God relating to humans in Jesus to reconcile them, does presuppose that humans are estranged from God and are in need of reconciliation; and that God relates to them in Jesus anyway. They are both christocentric, cannot be separated and spiral around each other in a logical relation. Kelsey (2009:899) writes that these two lines of theological anthropology spiral around each other in a double helix with a fixed internal structure. This double helix then spirals around the theological anthropology of part 1 (God relating creatively to all that is not God) and in doing so, forms a triple helix.

5.2.5 A Christological interpretation of *imago Dei*

This theocentric portrayal of human eccentric existence in Kelsey’s theological anthropology is described as “a whole-in-complexity” (Kelsey 2009:900). The structure of Kelsey’s theological anthropology turns on “a construal of canonical Christian Holy Scripture according to which the canon is made whole by three kinds of inseparable narratives, each of which has a distinct plot or narrative logic that cannot be conflated with either of the other two” (Kelsey 2009:897). This is a radical break from conventional Christian anthropology that develops a single narrative in a linear, chronological fashion. This single narrative holds that humans undergo a series of theological changes from “creation through estrangement from God in fall and sin to reconciliation with God, and through progressive sanctification to its destiny of eschatological glory” (Kelsey 2009:896). The organising principle for this single narrative is the concept of *imago Dei*, which also serves as the principle of continuity. This was traditionally understood in the interpretation of Genesis:1:26 to be the fundamental

feature that distinguishes humans from animals, and makes them distinctively human. Humans have a unique structure that images God.

Protestant and Roman Catholic theological anthropology attempted to “distinguish systematically between human beings’ essential structural image of God and the presence or absence of their conformity to that image in their actual lives’ ‘likeness’ (or un-likeness) to God” (Kelsey 2009:895). This remained dominant up to the middle of the twentieth century and is still popular. Kelsey very deliberately avoids using the concept of *imago Dei* to organise theological anthropology in a single systematic whole, and it does not feature in the three parts of his theological anthropology. Only in the codas at the end of his book does he introduce an alternative mode of using *imago Dei* to demonstrate how the three parts of his theological anthropology work together. Kelsey (2009:896) offers a Christological interpretation of the *imago Dei* — “the image of God is not a general property of human beings as God’s creatures, but is rather the concrete person of Jesus Christ in his own unsubstitutable personal identity”. He describes the traditional use of “image of God” and the “anchorlike role” it played in theological anthropology as “too inconclusive” to play such a prominent role in accounting for what human beings are (Kelsey 2009:900). In the New Testament, *imago Dei* is used in a “theological richer” way in the context of God relating to humans when they are alienated from God, “canonical narratives of God relating to reconcile humankind when it is estranged from God, narratives that extend the Pentateuch’s narrative of divine events of deliverance from bondage” (Kelsey 2009:901). He continues that the texts of the New Testament point out who Jesus Christ is, who humans are by merit of who Jesus is and establish how humans ought to relate to their proximate and ultimate contexts, once again by merit of who Jesus is.

The difference between Kelsey’s theological anthropology and other theological anthropologies with a christocentric interpretation of the *imago Dei* (for example that of Stanley Grenz who demonstrates that a relational interpretation of the “image of God” delivers a theological anthropology that offsets the postmodern loss of self) is Kelsey’s refusal to move his theological anthropology from the traditional systematic home in a doctrine of creation, to a doctrine of reconciliation or an eschatological doctrine. Kelsey (2009:902) writes that the systematic home of his theological anthropology is “at once the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of eschatological consummation, and the doctrine of reconciliation without conflating any two of those doctrines into the third”. He also wants to

demonstrate in his theological anthropology that the christological interpretation of the *imago Dei* bears similarly on the anthropological “What?”, “How?” and “Who?” questions.

The three texts which identify Jesus Christ with the image of God in different ways are 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15 where Christ is the “image of God”; and Hebrew 1:3 where the Son is “the exact imprint of God’s very being”, which Kelsey (2009:905) describes as a “functional equivalent” of “image of God”. In these three texts the image of God is identified with Jesus Christ in his “unsubstitutable identity as a living human personal body” (Kelsey 2009:906). He continues that this identity is anchored in Christ’s distinctive relationship to God and God’s unique relationship to him, and Jesus Christ’s unique relationship “with fellow living human bodies in their proximate contexts”. Kelsey (2009:911) writes that Jesus Christ as *imago Dei* organises a variety of theological anthropological assertions in a formal coherent “whole-in-complexity”. He summarises that to say that “Jesus Christ in his concrete living human personal identity is the decisive, if ambiguous, *imago Dei*”, is to say that the ways in which canonical narratives describe his identity is to merit the ways in which his theological anthropology characterises God, God’s way of relating to all creatures in community, and ways in which humans in community should respond appropriately to God.

Kelsey (2009:915) continues that “Jesus Christ in his humanity is the decisive image of God” and this description guides the way in which God can be characterised in the three ways God relates to all that is not God. A Trinitarian understanding of God is ultimately anchored in canonical narratives that describe the content of the “image of God” and it requires a “differentiated Trinitarian characterization of each of the three ways in which the Triune God relates to all that is not God”. There is a certain pattern in the difference in each way of relating. Kelsey (2009:915) describes these ways of relating as follows:

“In relating creatively, the ‘Father’ creates through the Son in the power of the Spirit”; in relating the eschatological blessing, “the Spirit is sent by the ‘Father’ with the Son”; in relating reconcilingly, “the Son is sent by the ‘Father’ in the power of the Spirit”.

The Triune God relates to all that is not God in this triadic way and each is “one aspect of the ultimate context of human life” (Kelsey 2009:917). He continues that this is an enactment of the love between God and his Son and these relations are “generative of the well-being and flourishing of those with whom Jesus enters into solidarity”.

5.2.6 Kelsey's response to critics

Reacting to a question by Thiel whether Kelsey's "nonfoundationalist, or unsystematic, or anti-apologetic approach to the theology" is "truly as methodologically normative", Kelsey (2011:73) responds that what he endeavours to do is to make a case that if one tries to explore the "logic of Christian beliefs" with regard to anthropology within a project called "secondary theology", the methodological choices in "Eccentric Existence" do make room for "a complex and coherent account of *anthropos*". Kelsey (2011:74) also considers his theological anthropology to be "in a broad sense" faithful to the Reformation heritage, but that on specific points of doctrine, "it can only be 'yes' to this and 'no' to that". He continues that the focus of his theological anthropology on "human strength and responsibility before God" is faithful to the structure of the "Institutes" of Calvin. McDougall (2011:56) writes that Kelsey truly follows in Calvin's footsteps in making all claims about humankind subordinate to claims about God, by developing "a genuine *theocentric* anthropology" wherein the features of what, how and who we are as humans are governed by God's dynamic relationship towards the world. She continues that his theological anthropology is influenced by the Reformed tradition, but also by premodern theology, where anthropology was "scattered among the doctrines of creation, redemption, eschatology and revelation". She writes that the "central mandate" of Kelsey's theological anthropology is to reform the "value anthropocentrism" of premodern Christian theological anthropology wherein human creatures are elevated above other features of creation by focussing on the "rational soul" and by denigrating the physical body (McDougall 2011:57).

Referring specifically to "Kelsey's trinitarian grammar of sin", she writes that Kelsey does not merely focus on how humans "miss the mark" in reacting to the graciousness of God, but also how these incorrect responses "are manifest in a host of destructive practices in their proximate contexts, that is, in violations of their neighbours, themselves, and the rest of creation" (McDougall 2011:58). She continues that Kelsey moves away from an emphasis on "the interior psychology of sin" and in its place offers "a trinitarian grammar of sin" that endeavours to form Christian identity and guide the faithful "in their actions on behalf of their fellow creatures in their everyday life-situations". While there are other theological anthropologies that employ the doctrines of the Trinity to structure their anthropologies, McDougall (2011:65) writes that Kelsey's theological anthropology is unparalleled in its rigorous tracking of "how the distinctive patterns of the Trinity's agency in the world

illuminate the distorted ways in which human beings respond to their God, themselves, and the world around them”. She continues that he makes a conceptual distinction between moral evil and sin, where sin is an inappropriate response to God and moral evil is a violation of “other creatures’ integrity that fail to support their well-being”. She writes that Kelsey “logically interweaves the realities of sin and moral evil” in such a way that our response to God in faith, hope and love entails ways of living and responding properly to our proximate contexts. McDougal (2011:66) writes that the responses of human creatures are “always and everywhere embodied responses manifest in wise actions in our situated quotidian existence”.

Ford (2011:51) asks the question why there is such little discussion on sex and gender in Kelsey’s theological anthropology and only one passing reference to the Song of Songs in his use of wisdom literature, especially in the light of the important relationship between theological formulations and its relevance in a specific cultural context. Kelsey (2011:80) responds that the absence of the discussion of gender, sex (and the matter of race), is the function of the “basic personal identities” and the “quotidian personal identities” of human creature in his theological anthropology. Their “basic personal identity” is comprised by their incorporation into Jesus Christ, and is more basic than their “quotidian personal identity”. He continues that issues about race, sex and gender are part of human’s “quotidian personal identities” which are socially and culturally constructed and “underdetermined by biological reality”. Kelsey continues that while these issues are important, he “judged them to be topics for another time and another project”.

McDougal (2011:69) writes that she was struck by the analytical style of Kelsey’s “systematically unsystematic theology” where he intentionally “blurs the styles of pastoral and systematic theology” and poignantly asks why “concrete narratives and dramatic human portraits” do not figure in his theological anthropology with its call to focus on the “concrete particularities of human lives” as it did in his previous books. Kelsey (2011:85) responds that the rationale for his style is the reflective practice of “primary theology” and “secondary theology” which forms part of the common life of Christian communities. He continues that primary theology is analytical, but also very concrete, and that Christian communities employ primary theology often in very “unselfconscious ways” when they disagree or reflect together on the “faithfulness” of received ways, often expressed in some kind of communal practice such as education, prayer, liturgies, ethical analysis, moral judgment-making, and a variety of other expressions. Primary theology appeals to certain “guides” which can become a topic of

disagreement, critical reflection and misunderstanding (Kelsey 2011:86). He continues that secondary theology is about the critical reflection on these received authoritative theological formulations and endeavours to put new formulations of theological themes forward to primary theology. He then concedes that his theological anthropology as exposed in “Eccentric Existence” is “perhaps relentlessly, an exercise in secondary theology”.

McDougal (2011:70) writes that Kelsey is deeply suspicious of “the psychological mindset in which theological anthropology has been cast in the past few centuries” and of the ability of theologians “to sculpt the inner psychological landscape of human beings” and of faith communities, exposing the “internal workings of human consciousness or the human heart”. God’s dynamic being remains the primary subject of Kelsey’s theocentric anthropology. She continues that Kelsey’s theological anthropology is cast in “hypothetical mode” with an invitation to try and look at important theological questions in a certain way, and it is not a normative assertion about the way in which theological anthropology should be done. She interprets Kelsey’s proposals as a “conceptual compass” to enable theological anthropology to stay on course. Kelsey does not dictate a path, but helps readers to steer a theological way and for that kind of practical wisdom, she and others “will remain gratefully in Kelsey’s debt”.

5.3. The “body” in Part One. Created: Living on Borrowed Breath

Kelsey (2009:242) proposes to answer the question on what humans are by way of a theology of birth. He does this by reflecting on what the story of the creation of Job (Job 10), having been born as a living body, and of Job being given a living body, implies for a theological anthropology. In this way Kelsey endeavours to explore “the anthropological implications of the fact of our having been born into such ultimate and proximate contexts”. The difference between Job being given a body by God and having been born as a living body lies in God’s involvement in each of these scenarios.

5.3.1 Having been born as a living body

The notion of having been born, describes the manifestation of a living body, God’s creation of that specific human body, the completion of the process of gestation (Kelsey 2009:247). Kelsey (2009:248) continues to clarify the idea of a “living body” based on three broad

generalisations deduced from modern life science. The first is that “a living body’s relation to its environment is internal to that living body’s reality *qua* living, and conversely”. The body stands in a dynamic relationship to aspects in its proximate context, to its biology (the life of the living body), and cannot be separated from its ecology (the environment it interacts with). “Living body” is an ambiguous term since it can refer to an organism contained by its skin or to an organism which “extends beyond its skin to include all the influences it has on its environment”.

Kelsey (2009:248) refers to Schloss who described living bodies as systems that are “open at *two* ends, informational and energetic”. Living bodies scan their environment for information about possible threats and resources and at the same time they explore sources of energy for the upkeep of the homeostatic structure of their lives. Kelsey eloquently describes living bodies as “self-regulating sets of energy systems that seeks to preserve internal homeostasis, a relatively persisting, self-organizing structure that does not dissipate the equilibrium of its various internal energy systems and resists entropy or thermodynamic decay”. In this regard the body is not only an instrument to life, but is also a manifestation of life. Kelsey (2009:249) once again refers to Schloss in writing that “disembodied or immaterial life is just as dead — to itself and the world — as non-living matter”. Kelsey stresses that the notion of living body encompasses biological, cultural and social life, as well as the capacity to develop more complex systems of social and cultural life forms. If a habitat does not have infinite resources, and populations continue to increase through reproduction, then death is necessary even though it is not evolutionary or physiologically necessary. This is the third broad generalisation (Kelsey 2009:249). The implications of “the evolutionary biology of carbon-based life” are that energy resources would have to be infinite or reproduction should end in a proximate context without death.

Based on his reading of Job 10, Kelsey (2009:250) extracts nine core themes in “a theology of human creatureliness”, in which humans are born as a “living body”. Being born as a living body is a gift from the Triune God who is “inextricably involved” in humans being born. This is the implication “if the ultimate and proximate contexts of our having been born are God relating to us creatively in radically free intimacy”. Incorporating the notion of “interaction amongst energy systems”, Kelsey (2009:251) states that all energy systems are radically dependent on the free creativity of God for their continuing existence. The

givenness of all energy systems, including the living human body, bears the imprint of God's gift.

Secondly, God created actual human bodies and not only physical possibilities, or the potentiality or the "transcendental existential-ontological 'conditions of possibility' of human bodies' lives" (Kelsey 2009:251). Abiotic matter arose within a physical context and from that the human body with a distinctive DNA evolved. Kelsey (2009:252) continues that human bodily life has a further reach. A variety of "organic relationships", as well as cultural and social relationships are located in the proximate context where "the lives and well-being of infant human bodies" are nurtured; where human bodies can learn to communicate, build relationships "to take charge of their own lives", and form their identities. To confess that "God relates to us creatively in our having been born", however, implies more than the notion that God created certain social and physical possibilities. Kelsey (2009:252) writes that it also implies that God relates immediately, intimately and creatively to "the process and event of each living human body having been born". God relates to the living human body, as well as to living human experience/consciousness.

Kelsey (2009:253) builds this on the reasoning that "God's creative relating to human consciousness is the transcendental condition of the possibility of what is distinctively human about living human bodies". He furthermore makes the crucial distinction between human sperm, eggs, embryos and fetuses, who have the potential to be living human bodies and actual human living bodies. Kelsey (2009:254) continues that the narrative of our creation by God stands in opposition to the classification of human sperm, eggs, zygotes, embryos and fetuses as actual living human bodies. The actuality of a living human body is not located in human cells containing human DNA, but "the actuality as a living human body is a function of its having been born". A living human body is an intricate concept, more than possibility or potentiality (a development according to definite, rule-directed ways). Kelsey (2009:254) refers to "personal bodies", where actual living human bodies are living human bodily creatures, so much more than potentiality and possibility. They are creatures of God and therein lie their dignity and value as "personal bodies". These actual living human bodies are able to live apart from their mothers' bodies, but not separate from complex social and physical contexts (Kelsey 2009:255).

Kelsey is adamant that all creatures are equal insofar as the freedom and the immediacy in which God relates to all. The other side of the coin then is that “God’s creative relating to nonhuman bodies is as immediate and free as is God’s relating to human living bodies” (Kelsey 2009:255). He expands this third theme by writing that God relates to a variety of creatures in a way that are “appropriate to their creaturely powers”. He continues that the Triune God relates to organic and inorganic creatures in a similar way. This equal way in which God as Creator relates to all creatures, undermines the argument that there is a metaphysical substance like a soul separate from the body. According to this argument, God can only relate directly to a spiritual entity like a soul and then through this relation, God is indirectly the source of life for the body. Kelsey (2009:256) is firm in the viewpoint that quite another way of argumentation should be found for the idea of “nonextended, nonbodily souls”.

As a fourth theme, Kelsey wants to clarify the use of the term “human” in theological anthropology. Contemporary description of a “human” is that of a creature with the genetic structure of *Homo sapiens*. The word “human” in the description alludes to “actual living human bodies” making certain theological anthropological claims. Kelsey (2009:257) continues that it distinguishes them from other living and nonliving entities. The solidarity of the human family is founded “in human beings’ bodies” and in the DNA these bodies share (Kelsey 2009:261). He poignantly continues that “neither differences in development of sexual organs nor differences in characteristics by which individuals are assigned to socially constructed racial types” are important to determine whether a living body falls under the category of “human living bodies”. Race and gender simply are of no importance in determining the “humanness” of a particular body.

Premodern theological anthropologies held to the belief that Adam and Eve were created as adults and that all other human beings descended from them. As a fifth core theme, Kelsey (2009:261) makes the far reaching interpretation that the actual living human body created by God is the result of a developmental process, “but is inherently a reality that is continuously changing and developing in various ways towards various outcomes for the rest of its life as a living human body”. The question then for theological anthropology is what the relation is between the newborn body and the developmental stages preceding its birth. Kelsey (2009:262) does not deny that the “pre-birth moments” contribute to the newborn body’s history. He, however, makes certain claims based on his understanding of Job. At each

moment of its development, God relates creatively to God's creature. He continues that each moment "consists of a tissue of living human cells", but this still does not constitute an actual living human body. It is a zygote, a creature of God with the potential of developing into an embryo, a foetus and a potential living human body (Kelsey 2009:263). Birth or having been born, is the marker for an actual living body which distinguishes it from potential living human creatures. Kelsey continues that this differs from traditional anthropologies which function on the assertion that the viability of the foetus in the uterus counts as a living human body and is a sign that the foetus received its "immortal rational soul" (and therefore its *imago Dei*) from God. Kelsey employs a clear naturalistic reasoning to explain the difference between an actual human living body and a potential living body, and does not rely on the notion of an immortal rational soul as part of the concept of the image of God.

The sixth theme Kelsey (2009:264) develops is that living human bodies are centres of actual power, a power that is genuinely different to God's power. He writes that modern Christianity is as uneasy with the fact of human power as it was in the past with human sexuality, an unease which is built on the notion that true faithfulness to God requires the relinquishing of power and "the embrace of powerlessness". All living organisms and all mammals have some of the same biochemistry. What distinguishes human living bodies is the way in which they organise their energy, having "a distinctive array of capacities for specific types of self-regulating behaviour that involve more complex, more long-range, and more flexibly modulated planning" (Kelsey 2009:265). He continues that this self-regulated behaviour must constantly be empowered and nourished by social interaction with other humans. Language cannot be separated from a culture's array of rituals, gestures, myths, symbols and images. Kelsey (2009:266) writes that language gives shape to "living bodies' capacities for self-regulated exercise of their powers". He continues that the interchange between a living body's capacity for language and a culture's language is a crucial characteristic of humans.

In premodern theological anthropologies these "systems of powers" or energy systems have been referred to as "higher powers". These "higher powers" have then been equated with "intellectual powers" or in the case of modern theology, with "powers of consciousness". Kelsey continues that they are considered to be "higher" because they are not located in the body or they enable someone to transcend the body; or since no other species with living bodies have these powers. In this line of thought lower powers are confined to the body and higher powers are located in a nonmaterial soul (Kelsey 2009:266). In this way, humans are

construed to be superior to other kinds of living bodies. Referring to the work by Howard Gardner (1993) on different kinds of intelligence, Kelsey continues that “any account of the metaphysical status of either type of power must take into account the physical grounding in human beings’ living bodies”. These powers described as “intelligence” or “consciousness” are equal to all other kinds of human power. Even though humans have powers that vary in the degree to which other creatures possess them, “it is only as actual living human bodies that they have the powers they do have” (Kelsey 2009:267). God created “centres of power” that are located in living human bodies.

As a seventh theme, Kelsey (2009:267) writes that these centres of powers located in actual living human bodies, are finite. He continues that they are integrated in their proximate contexts and are “all radically dependent on God’s free creativity for their continuing actuality”. He writes that they are finite because they are rooted in “an environing network of other lives” where some will ensure their survival at others’ expense or can only survive if there is a sufficient supply of other living bodies to feed on. A living body survives by feeding on other living and nonliving bodies in various degrees of predation. Since each living body functions in a specific network of relations, other “creaturely centres of power” have an influence on other living bodies, “constraining it in many ways, often violating it, sometimes destroying it” (Kelsey 2009:267). This implies that desire and neediness are an integral part of the concept of living human body. Kelsey (2009:268) explains that “desire is not a deformity of human creatureliness” since humans desire what they need. This is a “principal motive” in which humans regulate their interactions with other creatures. Kelsey reasons that the notion that desire is a particular sign of deformity that humans should triumph over is a biased Christian perspective. He writes “that to overcome desirousness would amount to overcoming creatureliness itself” and that would be “faithless to the Creator” (Kelsey 2009:268).

Kelsey describes living human bodies as possessing an “epistemic mysteriousness”. He writes that living human bodies are objects of knowledge because of their complexity (Kelsey 2009:268). Not all manner of knowing the human body can be exhausted, but Kelsey continues that the Trinitarian formula of human beings created by “the Father through the Son” grounds our knowability “in the very life of God”. Living human bodies are amazingly complex and in this sense they are “inexhaustible objects of knowledge”. Herein lies their “epistemic mysteriousness”, which Kelsey explores as an eighth theme.

As the ninth theme, Kelsey (2009:269) writes that “in creating us God is self-committed to respect and nurture us as living bodies rather than resisting or threatening to violate us as living bodies as long as we live”. As creatures being born with living human bodies we are considered to be good. This means that we are valued by God. Kelsey continues that our “goodness” is because of the kind of living bodies we are, vulnerable, capable of suffering and causing harm, “thoroughly ambiguous both morally and ontologically”. Our “goodness” is not grounded in our remarkable capacities, or wisdom or the role we fulfil in our proximate contexts, but is to be found in the same way and kind as the goodness of all other creatures. Our “goodness” is found in the self-commitment of God “to valuing creatures in delight with them for what they are, valuing them in the free and delighted intimacy and the intimate and attentive freedom of God’s creative ongoing active relating to them” (Kelsey 2009:270).

5.3.2 Being given a living body

The claim that Job has been born a living body (implying that he is a living body) and that he is given a body by God (meaning that he has a living body) does not represent a “metaphysically dualist theological anthropology” (Kelsey 2009:272) where a distinction is made between two different entities described in many versions of Christian anthropology as a “mortal body” and an “immortal rational soul”. He continues that it indicates that the story of the creation of Job (being born as a living body) is complex enough to require two different narratives. There is a distinction between Job and his body that does not indicate a dichotomy. Kelsey (2009:272) writes that “it is the human capacity for response and account giving that requires that the story of Job’s creation as his having been born distinguishes between (and not separate) Job and his living body”. He continues that Job’s response to God is an implementation of his powers to self-regulate as an actual living body where Job perceived that God had broken his commitment to him and therefore God’s creature was suffering.

God directly gives a body to Job:

“You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and sinews.
You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.” (Job 10:11,12)

Kelsey (2009:272) interprets Job being given a living body by God as “a story about the consequence for Job of his creation in his having been born”. He continues that the significance of having been born as a living body with intricate and far reaching powers, is that being given a living body the human creature is “made response-able to God and account-able to God for the character of my (bodied) response to God”. He writes that the implications for theological anthropology of being given a living body by God, are that by virtue of God relating to humans as their Creator, they are each unsubstitutable for one another (they are “unsubstitutable centres of finite power”) — as humans they have a dignity and every human being deserves unqualified respect.

These two ways of narrating the creation of humans express the notion that “being a living body is integral to human creatureliness” (Kelsey 2009:285). The body is not inferior to a nonbodily entity that carries the essence of the real person. Kelsey adamantly continues that “the real you is none other than this living human body that has been born of particular parents at a particular time and place in a particular society with its particular culture”. These two interwoven and integrated narratives are part of a larger story about “the particular, concrete, and complex way in which God creatively relates to humankind”. These two narratives must be told in tandem, otherwise when told in isolation they have various problematic anthropological consequences.

One implication is what Kelsey (2009:284) refers to as a “metaphysical physicalist view” of the creature. In this view the human creature and the biologically living body with a specific DNA constitutes our mathematical identity. This narrative of our having been born emphasises the “sheer givenness” of our living human bodies. Kelsey continues that this then implies that theological anthropology is compatible with ontologically reductive physicalism or materialism where the living human body is analysed by natural sciences by way of “law-governed physical processes” and presented as “an exhaustive account of its reality”. When the second way of narrating human creation (being given a living human body by God) is told in isolation from the first, then “the real human creature is this mysterious you and not the living body” which is considered of lesser importance than the real you (Kelsey 2009:285). He refers to this line of thought as “an ontologically dualist view” of humans. He continues that in this view the “you” is a separate and independent entity from the “living body” and this “you” is more fundamental to human creatureliness than the living body. The real you is

endowed with the gift of a living human body. When these two narratives are told in tandem, they block the possible implications of each story.

Referring to the “creaturely ontological integrity of human creatures”, Kelsey (2009:282) writes that it is embedded in their “ex-centredness”, in the unique ways in which the Creator relates to his creatures, “the ground of their reality and value”. It does not have its roots in human’s psychological, moral or physical centredness. He states that this creaturely integrity is deeply fragile. Human creatures’ physical biological integrity could be severely harmed for example by losing a limb and still retain their ontological integrity. He continues that humans can become psychotic and emotionally disturbed for a variety of reasons and even become dysfunctional. Still, their ontological integrity is intact. He writes that “a human living body retains its integrity as a human creature even when it has deeply compromised itself morally” (Kelsey 2009:282). He continues that a human living body remains human under all these circumstances and “by God’s gracious creative hospitality, she or he is still, in company with other creatures, God’s genuinely “other” partner in a community of discourse...and capable of responding in some manner to God, even if only, like many living creatures, by its sheer mute living presence before God”. Both stories narrating the integrity of what God creates (each human creature as a unity-in-complexity) are crucial to convey this “eccentricity” of their integrity (Kelsey 2009:286). He continues that both these intermingled stories should be narrated in tandem to emphasise the fact that the human creature’s integrity lies “in God’s continuously active relating to creatures as their creator” and not in themselves. This Triune God, our creator “gives us space and time to be ourselves” and Kelsey (2009:286) strikingly describes us as “fallibly integral human bodies, capable of being in charge of certain ranges of behaviour for which they are accountable, and susceptible to various types of disintegration of their integral unity”.

5.3.3 Personal bodies

Kelsey (2009:286) employs the notion of the personal living body as the theological anthropological term for the living human body in its fragile integrity. The word “personal” and “person” is only used in relation to human creatures. He finds it problematic when theological anthropology merely tries to take over the powerful notion of person as it is often used in Western societies (Kelsey 2009:288). He continues that standards used in psychology in particular, measure a being as a person if a being can express, organise and develop

complex emotions and sensibilities in its behaviour towards other creatures. By contrast, nonhuman living beings and inanimate objects could never develop this range of emotions and are therefore considered as non-persons. Another way to classify a person, is by a being's ability to have a certain moral sense (Kelsey 2009:289), and the question when such a being could be held morally accountable. He continues that a third way is the use of the concept of "intelligence" in the West, where it is considered that "a being is a person if it is rational". He warns theological anthropology against the use of "person" in these ways with "classificatory and evaluative force" in which social conventions play a dominant role (Kelsey 2009:290). He proposes a theological concept of person in Christian anthropology. Reading the intertwined story of Job having been born as God's creation in tandem, he suggests that a human creature is considered to be a "person/personal being" by merit of God relating to him/her and not based on their emotional, intellectual or moral capabilities (Kelsey 2009:291). Kelsey (2009:292) summarises this in stating that by viewing a body as "personal" is to "acknowledge that it has a certain status before God, not a certain array of powers".

Kelsey (2009:291) writes that God "personalises" these human creatures "indirectly through the medium of the quotidian and, especially, through its ordinary languages". He continues that their proximate contexts are a public space made up by a "covenant-like social structure" in which God addresses humankind and humans may or may not address God. Their "addressability" is based on "God's relating to them in address that creates them" as actual living bodies and as personal bodies with the ability to build relationships with others through the use of ordinary language — "God...talks living human bodies into being personal" (Kelsey 2009:293). He continues that the call to human creatures to be wise for their proximate context, is a call by God addressed to humans as creaturely living bodies as well as personal bodies. What God creates are "personal living human bodies" (Kelsey 2009:297) in a social space where God speaks to them in ordinary language, with humans having the ability to respond to God in their ordinary language (Kelsey 2009:303). He continues that no absolute standard exists for human perfection (bodily, mentally or emotionally), and that the only sense of perfection lies in "the appropriateness of a personal bodies' response to God's relating to them".

5.3.4 Flourishing bodies

As humans with personal bodies we live in the knowledge that we shall die. We live on borrowed breath. The life of living in our bodies is our own “in the sense that it simply is that human creature” (Kelsey 2009:309). He continues that we, however, never possess our “bodied personal life” since we work with the concept of accountability to God, and therefore are more like caretakers of our living bodies. Inspired by Augustine, many Western theological anthropologies are based on a movement from a doctrine of creation to the doctrines of fall and sin. In their understanding, human perfection is diminishing as a result of the Fall. Evil entered the equation and sin is the human failure to live in line with this notion of perfection (Kelsey 2009:309). In contrast to this, Kelsey suggests that evil and sin should be understood as opposing “the glory of God expressed in God’s creative relating to us as personal bodies”. Inspired by Irenaeus, Kelsey (2009:310) writes that “the glory of God is a flourishing personal body”. He continues that human creatures are accountable to God through the manner in which they orientate their living bodies in their proximate context, defined by practices that “make for the proximate contexts’ well-being for their own sakes” and not for some kind of outcome that transcends this proximate context. God calls us to be wise and according to Kelsey our fitting response is “faith”. He continues that it is “in faith that personal bodies flourish as the glory of God” where he understands faith as “wise human action in the quotidian for its well-being for its own sake”. This call to wisdom is a practical wisdom.

Kelsey (2009:319) defines human practice as “any form of socially established cooperative human action that is complex and internally coherent, is subject to standards of excellence that partly define it”. This human action is guided by the intention to allow human beings to flourish by being wise, to flourish “in the here-and-now quotidian world”. He continues that a Christian theological anthropology that takes human creatureliness as seriously as their eschatological consummation and reconciliation portrays humans “as fundamentally bodied agents, not patients, bodily enactors of intentions”. This call to be wise calls for discernment and vision. Kelsey (2009:320) writes that there are no clear theories about what constitutes wise action for the well-being of other creatures. He continues that the vocation to be wise is also an invitation to “look and listen carefully and figure it out for yourselves”. Learn wherever you can. He summarises that personal bodies flourish when wise action is

discerning about “what makes for the well-being of particular fellow creatures in their particular situations”.

Kelsey (2009:316) does not subscribe to some kind of “abstractly ideal and absolute standard of human flourishing” against which the life of every human personal body could be measured. He does not even see such a standard in the life of Jesus. He continues to describe the flourishing of human bodily life as the “particular finite array of powers and capacities that a given living body has and the particularities of the finite networks of relationships in which it has been set in its proximate contexts across time”. This he writes in the light of a previous remark that different creatures express the glory of God in different ways and that it expresses God’s glory “more richly” if it possesses more complex powers. Human personal living bodies are complex and rich in various types of power and are the glory of God “in their own distinctive modes simply as living bodies creatively related to by God” (Kelsey 2009:317). Even though wisdom literature place the emphasis on a prosperous and healthy life (in line with the theme that “being wise will make life bloom” and in its biological, cultural, emotional, social, and intellectual dimensions), Kelsey (2009:318) proposes that even when personal bodies are unhealthy they still express God’s glory in their unique way. This has the further implication for theological anthropology of the degree of flourishing at any given time of a human’s life. Kelsey (2009:319) writes that the degree can vary greatly to which a specific personal body may thrive “so that it is able to manifest the beauty of the emotional, intellectual, and social grace of which it is capable and is able to nurture both companions and descendants”.

5.4 The “body” in Part Two. Consummated: Living on Borrowed Time

5.4.1 The pre- and post – Easter body of Jesus

Kelsey (2009:543) proposes that the traditional trope “resurrection of the body” is the most appropriate way to express the notion of “a human creature whose eschatological consummation is fully actualized”. The narratives in the canonical Gospels display a “pattern of discontinuity-in-continuity between the post-Easter Jesus and the pre-Easter Jesus” (Kelsey 2009:544). He continues that the focus in the stories of Luke and John is on the tangibility of Jesus’ post-Easter body and at the same time it tells of the difference from physical bodies since he simply disappears after having walked with two disciples on the road

to Emmaus, something physical bodies are not capable of. In 1 Corinthians 15:44 Paul makes the distinction between the “physical” body that can die and the “spiritual” body that is resurrected. Kelsey (2009:544) writes that the continuity between the spiritual and physical lies in the fact that it is the same body. The discontinuity is displayed in the limitation and perishability of the physical body as opposed to the power and imperishability of the spiritual body. Kelsey continues by referring to Peter Lampe who wrote that traditional Jews referred to the complete person as “body” and not just the physical body and therefore that the Greek translation of body as “soma” refers to Kelsey’s own description in the first part of his theological anthropology as an “actual living human personal body”. Kelsey (2009:545) writes that the continuity lies in the tangibility of the pre-Easter body and the resurrected post-Easter body of Jesus that has been killed, but “it does not imply that his pre-Easter bodiliness is the principle of continuity that metaphysically explains the continuity of the post- and pre-Easter Jesus”. He continues that there exists a dramatic discontinuity between the matter of His post- and pre-Easter body and writes that “it is a bodily continuity despite, we may say, the not-so-slow disintegration of his carbon-based material body”. Kelsey (2009:545) reasons that biochemistry can be included in the explanation of the continuity in matter between the pre- and post-Easter body, but that it is not crucial to “the concept of a living human body”.

Kelsey (2009:546) writes that there is a discontinuity in the “mode of bodiliness” of the pre- and post-Easter Jesus. He refers to Hans-Joachim Eckstein (2002) to point out that canonical narratives make it clear that “the living human personal body, identified with the pre-Easter Jesus, who is encountered post-Easter is a transfigured or glorified body that is in important ways discontinuous with the pre-Easter Jesus’ body”. He continues that Paul writes in 1 Cor.15:50 that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable”, meaning that only a glorified body can inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus is not resurrected into his previous, physical body “tied to quotidian space, time and matter”, but is raised “into the borrowed time of God’s eschatological future” as a mark of “the proleptic intrusion of the eschatological reign of God into human creatures’ quotidian proximate contexts” (Kelsey 2009:546). He continues to draw two implications for theological anthropology. The first is that the resurrected body of Jesus should not be confused with a resuscitated body (like those of Jairus’ daughter or the widow’s son in Nain or Lazarus). They are considered as resuscitations and do not have “the significance of being the concrete way in which God inaugurates fulfilment of eschatological blessing”. The

second implication is that “bodily resurrection as eschatological transfigured or glorified bodies is social and communal”. The adopted human brothers and sisters of Jesus share in the same eschatological consummation since the “fulfilment of God’s promise of eschatological blessing has actually been inaugurated in the bodily resurrection of Jesus”. Jesus is resurrected in and with community (Kelsey 2009:547). The bodily life of Jesus is more than the pre-Easter life in his body. This “more” lies in the proximate context of the bodily resurrected Jesus (and ours) which Kelsey (2009:550) describes as “a new heaven and earth where they live as glorified human bodies in a proximate context constituted by networks of interrelationships with fellow creatures”. He refers to John Polkinghorne (2002), who writes that there is sufficient discontinuity to ascertain that “the new creation is not just a redundant repetition of the old”. Kelsey continues that the “more” is also captured by the otherness of the new creation which is discerned by “justice, peace and love that characterize the community-in-intimate-communion that constitutes the life of the triune God”.

5.4.2 Eschatologically fully consummated living human personal bodies

Even though Kelsey (2009:552) admits that there is “virtually no grounds” for proposals with descriptions of “glorified human personal bodily life and its proximate context” without bordering on “fantasy pictures” of life in a new heaven and earth promoting various forms of piety, he nevertheless puts forth proposals about the “fully actualized eschatological consummation of human personal bodies in community” (Kelsey 2009:553). He bases his concept on the internal logic of Christian beliefs with an effort to “steer imaginative speculation away from the more misleading and dangerous fantasies”. He continues to write that he formulates his concept at the intersection of descriptions of an actual living human personal body in community, the minimal conditions that should be met according to evolutionary biology of what constitutes “life”, the “logic of relations” among theological claims, and being guided by the “dialectic between the continuity and discontinuity of the post-Easter Jesus and pre-Easter Jesus”.

Kelsey (2009:554) then formulates his concept of “eschatologically fully consummated human personal bodies” with the introduction that “it is possible to conceive coherently”, and then expands the characteristics of glorified human personal bodily life in its proximate contexts. Such glorified bodily life is the resurrection of “the same human quotidian body that had died”, continuing with it in the discontinuity of having a non-carbon-based-

biochemistry and not being subjected to evolution anymore. It possesses an “integral, relatively self-regulating and self-directing set of energy systems” with the organisation and functions crucial to life. He continues that in the same way that physical living human bodies are “internally related” to their proximate contexts, eschatologically glorified bodies are internally related to the new creation (the new heaven and new earth) as their proximate contexts to access sources of energy to “overcome entropic forces”. Kelsey (2009:554) writes that should glorified human bodies be considered as “living”, they must be dependent partially on relationships with other creatures as the sources of the kind of energy they would need, but that these sources of energy “will not lie in the carbon-bases biochemistry of the evolving living matter” humans now know and are dependent on. He continues that the new creation as the proximate context of resurrected human bodies is finite “in the way all creatures are in the ultimate context of the triune God relating to them” and the new creation remains radically dependent on God’s relating for its value and reality. This dependency of a glorified human body on “creaturely sources of energy outside itself” implies that it is inherently mortal and “marked by tension between entropic forces, meaning that it is inherently vulnerable to disintegration which is a kind of death. This implies that resurrected living bodies are “as fully finite creatures as are quotidian physical living bodies” (Kelsey 2009:555). He continues that this finiteness of glorified human bodies are also expressed by the reality that they are “inherently relational, interacting with fellow human resurrected creatures in community-in-communion through which they give and receive energy”. Using Paul’s terms “imperishable” and “powerful” to describe glorified human bodies, Kelsey continues that a glorified body is “an integral set of energy systems that does not in fact disintegrate or die, although in its finitude it is nonetheless vulnerable to disintegration and death”, by merit of God who continues to relate to it in eschatological blessing.

Kelsey (2009:555) writes that it is possible to conceive coherently that glorified human bodies do not depend on predation for their energy sources and that no other kind of living body would depend on other creatures for their source of energy. He continues that glorified human bodies will also not be subjected to any form of pain since they will lack the biochemical basis for pain. Kelsey (2009:556) writes that in continuity with physical living human bodies, glorified human bodies’ energy systems will include social, cultural, mental, and expressive aspects in order to self-govern and self-regulate complex life. The continuity between glorified and physical human bodies as “God-related bodies” enables them for “the sociality of community-in-communion” where they would be recognisable as an individual

with unconditional dignity and unqualified respect. He continues that each glorified human body will have its own personal identity based on what it has done and experienced before. Kelsey (2009:556) writes that “its personal identity in its concrete particularity and singularity is best described in narratives that render the interplay between its interactions and its circumstances”. He continues that even though the glorified human body has no human DNA, its personal identity had the DNA of *Homo sapiens*. In the same way in which biological gender has no role to play in propagation, it remains an important feature of the glorified body’s personal identity. He continues that glorified human bodies’ concrete ways of interrelating are “determined by the particular unsubstitutable personal identities they have come to be”. Relating to other glorified bodies’ “concrete, particular unsubstitutable personal identities” happen in a way that is specifically appropriate and based on “relations to one another in their community-in-communion” that are equally just, although not identical (Kelsey 2009:557). He continues that through relating in the community-in-communion, glorified human bodies can grow and change in their “creaturely participation”.

Kelsey (2009:557) ends his description of glorified human bodies writing that “it is possible to conceive coherently” that based on the complex way of the Triune God’s relating to them, physical and glorified bodies are “always and unconditionally” equal to other realities, when it comes to the “unqualified immediacy and freedom of God’s relating; that God regards them as good and delights in them and that they are “freely given gifts, to whose well-being God is faithfully self-committed”. These are the features that underlie what “are discontinuous in a continuity of resurrected living human bodies with created living human bodies”.

5.5 The “body” in Part Three. Reconciled: Living by Another’s Death

Kelsey (2009:608) writes that the theological anthropological implications of God relating to reconcile all that is not God when it is estranged from God, should be read in tandem with God actively relating to create and God relating to draw to eschatological consummation. He continues that the relation between reconciliation and eschatological consummation is complex with both modes being enacted in the person of Jesus, through the actions and interactions to situations that represents the unsubstitutable identity of Jesus of Nazareth, through “the intentional actions of one living human personal body, the son of Mary, and by the perichoretic action of the Triune God”. The Incarnation is the “shorthand” for this complex interrelation. Kelsey (2009:609) writes that the Triune God actively relates to

“human personal bodies” by way of the Incarnation, relating to them “on terms defined by their creatureliness”. He continues that humans are reconciled and eschatologically consummated as human creatures “without being transformed into some other mode of reality...in and through the bodily actions in which one human creature, Jesus, enacts his own creaturely being as a living human personal body”.

Kelsey (2009:613) writes that God relates to humans through the Incarnation in the person of Jesus who is “as one amongst us at once both our ultimate and proximate contexts”. The Triune God relating to us is the ultimate context “in which we live and move and have our being” and God is identified as “the Son sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit” to reconcile estranged humankind to God (Kelsey 2009:623). He continues that it is this relationship that God shares with estranged human personal bodies in the here and now of their proximate contexts. It is in this sharing that “lies the reconciliation of their estrangement that is the condition of the possibility here and now in estranged human creatures being able to share in actualized consummation eschatologically” (Kelsey 2009:624). He continues that God’s immanence is God who is amongst us “as the incarnate Son to share with us his relationship with the Father”, and God’s transcendence is “God’s freedom from us”, from our reluctance to be reconciled with God. Kelsey (2009:626) puts forward the proposal that “Jesus is an unsubstitutable living human personal body sharing in community the creaturely quotidian”. He continues that Jesus is part of our proximate contexts and because of who Jesus is, our proximate contexts are that of “estranging contexts reconciled”. Jesus can only be part of our proximate contexts as “one among us as one of us” (Kelsey 2009:630). He continues that it is specifically as a living human personal body with definite ethnic, class and gender traits that Jesus shares our proximate contexts. He, however, defines our proximate contexts by who he is in his unsubstitutable personal identity.

Kelsey (2009:630) argues that “who” Jesus is, is more important in defining our proximate contexts than “what” he is, but that there can be no “who” without a “what”, “no personal identity without a living human bodily creature in, and cultured by, community”. He argues that the narrative logistics of the Synoptic Gospels convey the personal identity of Jesus. He proposes a different reading of the narratives in the Synoptic Gospels and identifies two plotlines driven by two different types of conflict (Kelsey 2009:632). He continues that the one plot is based on the conflict between Jesus and other religious and social leaders, family members and listeners. He writes that “internal to the narrative logic of this plotline is a

complex dialectic between Jesus' progressive loss of power...and Jesus' increasingly clear exercise of a mysterious power in the midst of powerlessness" (Kelsey 2009:633). He continues that the second plotline is driven "by a logic of a cosmic conflict between powers of evil that oppress human creatures with physical and mental disease on the one side, and God, who — in and through the person of Jesus' teaching and healing — resists those powers and frees people of their oppression", a conflict which culminates in the death of Jesus. Both narrative logics converge in the resurrection of Jesus where it becomes impossible to establish whether his resurrection is something Jesus does or whether God does it to him (Kelsey 2009:634). He continues that these two plotlines in the narratives of the Synoptic Gospels provide "the complex unsubstitutable personal identity of Jesus" and makes it clear from the beginning till the end that he is "uniquely God-related". Kelsey (2009:635) writes that Jesus' God-relatedness is essential to his personal identity and is quite complex.

He continues that on the one hand God creatively relates to Jesus as He does to every living human body, implying that Jesus "is created in having been born into a creaturely quotidian as a finite part of the quotidian". On the other hand God relates to Jesus, in a way in which He does to no other living human body, as "the one in whom God's long-promised eschatological victory over evil is concretely inaugurated". God also relates uniquely to Jesus "as the one in whom God reconciles estranged creatures to God". The personal identities of humans are then defined by the relation of the crucified and risen Christ to us and that relation "places us in a condition that is intrinsic to human personal living bodies, rather than extrinsic to them" (Kelsey 2009:702). He continues that these human personal living bodies flourish "when the patterns of their lives are consistent with their most basic identity, structurally defined by their being in Christ". This means that they flourish when their identities are "radically eccentric" based on the reconciling love of God in the incarnation of the Son (Kelsey 2009:718). Humans flourish in particular when their "existential hows" are enacted in love for God and love for the neighbour as an appropriate response to God's reconciling love (Kelsey 2009:827).

5.6 The "body": Imaging the Image of God

Kelsey (2009:1009) describes Jesus Christ as "imager of God in his humanity" and as the "grammatical paradigm" of human being. His theological anthropology is framed by a christocentric interpretation of how the Triune God relates to all that is not God, which "falls

together coherently in a triple helix of lines of proposals that together characterize three aspects of the way in which human beings, not bearing the image of God themselves, nonetheless image the image of God". He continues to describe humans as the "imagers of the image of God — namely finite living mysteries that image the triune living mystery".

God relates to all that is not God in three inseparable but distinct ways: to create, to draw to eschatological consummation, and to reconcile what is estranged from God. Jesus is sometimes described as the glory of God in his humanity, as an actual living human personal body (Kelsey 2009:1010). Jesus being paradigmatic of human creatures emphasises "the features of human bodiliness" that carry deep theological significance. He continues that "as the glory of God in their own creaturely human bodiliness, all other human creatures image the image of God". They image Jesus Christ who is the paradigmatic human creature. It is in this regard that humans are finite living mysteries, since they "image the triune living mystery in their own finite way" (Kelsey 2009:1010).

Kelsey (2009:1010) writes that the first aspect of the theological answer to the anthropological "What?" question suggests that "human beings image the image of God simply by living on borrowed breath —that is, simply by being human creatures in virtue of God relating to them creatively". He continues that Jesus of Nazareth images God by living on borrowed breath in his creaturely human body. This he does by the way he images God in his bodily acts and through his interaction with other creatures, as well as by simply being a human creature. Jesus is the image of God in his human bodiliness, whereas all other human beings image the image of God, since Jesus is paradigmatic of what it is to be an actual living human personal body (Kelsey2009:1011). Canonical narratives regard Jesus as "one actual living human personal body-in-community in his concrete particularity" (Kelsey 2009:1012). Kelsey continues that the phrase "Jesus' human bodiliness in his concrete particularity" is potentially dangerous. He argues that the concrete particularity of any human being's bodiliness consists of a wide variety of traits, for example gender, race, weight, intelligence, and so forth, and that by describing Jesus in his bodied humanity as grammatically paradigmatic, could easily lead to the assumption that, for example, the concrete particularity of Jesus' gender is paradigmatic of what it is in general about all human bodies that glorify God.

Kelsey (2009:1013) proposes that anyone's concrete particularity is "equally significant". On an ontological level, Jesus' creaturely bodiliness is portrayed to be the same as all other creatures (Kelsey 2009:1014). His life is depicted as "the life of a personal body born into a particular society, formed by its culture, language and history", a personal body that travelled a lot, interacted with people, became tired, hungry and thirsty (Kelsey 2009:1013). He continues that in relating to Jesus, God delights in Jesus' bodiliness. God considers his creaturely bodiliness to be good. His bodiliness is also considered to be a gift by merit of "the radical freedom in which God creatively relates to him". In the history of theological interpretation of Scriptures there are many examples of how racist, sexist, and ethnocentric proposals have been constructed around particular aspects of Jesus' bodied humanity; these construals have been used to oppress and subordinate women, lesbians, gays, and other marginalised people in Christian communities (Kelsey 2009:1014).

Kelsey (2009:1016) writes that a second aspect of the theological answer to the anthropological "What?" question is a proposal that human beings image the image of God purely by living on borrowed breath — that is, by simply being drawn (passive sense) to "an eschatological consummation that is ultimately actualized in the glorification of their human bodies in the new creation of God's eschatological rule". The focus on the resurrected body of Jesus has important implications for theological anthropology. Kelsey (2009:1017) writes that any concept of living body should entail descriptions of what an actual living personal body is (God relating to it creatively), as well as a resurrected living body (God relating to it to consummate it eschatologically). The bodily continuity between the pre-Easter and post-Easter Jesus implies that stories of the pre-Easter Jesus constitute the past of the post-Easter Jesus, which in turn imply that "as Jesus images God in his pre-Easter bodily humanity, so he images God, neither more nor less but in a different way, in his post-Easter bodily humanity" (Kelsey 2009:1018).

The theological anthropological notion of living body should cover quotidian and glorified bodies, the paradigmatic bodied humanity of Jesus, as well as the bodied humanity of all human creatures (Kelsey 2009:1019). This is what Kelsey does by putting forth on a formal level a coherent concept of living body that covers quotidian and glorified bodies (social bodied life, complex energy systems, the discontinuity between glorified and quotidian bodies explained by carbon-based biochemistry, and so forth). Kelsey (2009:1021) acknowledges that to answer these questions regarding bodily human life, theologians have to

conduct thought experiments that looks like theological science fiction, often bordering on theological science fantasy. Jesus is the imager of God in his glorified humanity as much as he is the imager in his creaturely humanity. Being the prototype of glorified humanity, “all other living human bodies must be said to image the image of God in virtue of their glorified human bodies” (Kelsey 2009:1023).

The third aspect of the theological answer to the anthropological “What?” question suggests that “estranged human beings image the image of God insofar as, reconciled to God, they are living by another’s death” (Kelsey 2009:1023). He continues that canonical narratives describe the content of the image of God by giving descriptions of Jesus’ identity. God relates concretely to reconcile estranged human creatures through “all that Jesus of Nazareth says, does and undergoes”. Jesus images God in a pattern of movement and is the paradigmatic human being (Kelsey 2009:1024). He continues that the “entire movement of Jesus’ ongoing bodily life in the power of the Spirit is *agape* incarnate. This has theological implications for what it means to be human imaging the image of God. Jesus images God in a bodied humanity with a range of types of freedom and in Jesus being the paradigmatic human, other humans image the image of God in their human bodies displaying this range of senses (Kelsey 2009:1025). Jesus is presented in the canonical narrative as being “free”; free in the sense of exercising a freedom of choice (he could have done otherwise); free in the sense that “he is capable of self-transcendence in a multitude of ways” (Kelsey 2009:1024).

He continues that Jesus could stand outside his society and culture with all its social conventions and was able to envisage a more compassionate and just society. Jesus is free in the sense that he acts “non-self-dividedly and wholeheartedly as a human being” out of love for God and his fellow creatures (Kelsey 2009:1025). He continues that Jesus is free in the sense that he could sabotage his own flourishing, by enacting “existential hows” as an inappropriate reaction to God’s relating to him. In this sense he is free to shape his “personal quotidian identity” at the cost of his vocation, even though he chooses not to (for example his prayer in Gethsemane to let the crucifixion pass him). Humans then are free only as “eccentric beings”, in being related to by the Triune God (Kelsey 2009:1025). He continues that humans image the image of God in their bodied life around these different senses of freedom. Kelsey (2009:1026) writes that “inasmuch as their bodily humanity images the imager of God, they, too, are finite mysteries, imaging the image of the triune infinite

mystery”, and that the ontological fact of their “concrete actuality as created, glorified and reconciled” is in the end inexplicable.

In answering the anthropological “How?” question, Kelsey (2009:1027) writes that human beings flourish “as images of the image of God” when they respond appropriately to the triune God relating to them creatively through “bodily enactments of practices”. He continues that these practices are enactments of faith, trust in God and “awed doxological gratitude toward the quotidian proximate contexts of their daily life worlds”. They flourish as images of the image of God when their bodily enactments of practices convey hope, “a joyous hopefulness” towards their proximate contexts in which God has “inaugurated their not-yet-fully actualized eschatological blessing” (Kelsey 2009:1029). Human beings flourish as images of the image of God when they exercise their own appropriate response to the Triune God, who relates to them to reconcile them to God (Kelsey 2009:1032). These enactments are practices of love for God and love for the neighbour. He continues that love for God is expressed in a “passionate desire for communion with God” as enacted in prayer. Love of the neighbour cannot be separated from prayer, and is expressed in “a passionate desire for community-in-communion with and for fellow estranged human beings” (Kelsey 2009:1033).

In giving the theological answer to the anthropological “Who?” question, Kelsey (2009:1045) proposes that all humans (with Jesus being paradigmatic of creaturely bodied humanity) image the image of God when their personal identities are formed by God, who gives their living personal bodies to them directly, and by God calling them to be wise for the benefit of their proximate contexts. They image the image of God, because their personal identities are defined by living in proximate contexts “into which God’s eschatological reign has already in fact actually intruded in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus”, and by finally being judged according to that resurrection (Kelsey 2009:1047). They image the image of God by being reconciled to God in Christ as estranged humans. They are “within” Christ who properly images God (Kelsey 2009:1049).

Kelsey (2009:1050) concludes that Jesus is “paradigmatic of who all actual human personal bodies are, as he is paradigmatic of what they are and how they are to be”. This is fulfilled in the created, resurrected and reconciling living body of Jesus. Only then are we imagers of the image of God.

5.7 The sentiment of the flesh

At the outset of his book, David Kelsey puts forward certain *desiderata* for a contemporary theological anthropology: no dualism between “mental” and “physical” capabilities; no comparison with “lesser” creatures based on higher values connected to the soul which carries the image of God; a presentation of humans in such a way that they are recognisable to contemporary readers; a recognition of human beings as “personal”, but different to psychological characterisations of humans; a truly theocentric anthropology with human existence centred outside itself in the Triune God; a description of humans that can accommodate contemporary research from other disciplines; and a portrayal of humans as “bodily public agents in community”. He argues that many theological anthropologies have a deep suspicion and fear of the body, in spite of a strong affirmation of the goodness of creation. His theological anthropology fits these *desiderata* and not only does it rigorously expound the patterns of the Triune God’s agency in the proximate and ultimate contexts of humans and fellow creatures, but steadfastly employs the human body as an organising principle throughout his theological anthropology. He fully develops and wholeheartedly embraces the notion of the human body as a personal living body that can flourish to the glory of God in its proximate context, where it acts with wisdom towards fellow creatures in everyday life situations to the benefit of the quotidian. That is why Kelsey can state that the authentic human is “the ordinary everyday human person”.

He breaks from other premodern and contemporary theological anthropologies that place a higher value on humans than on other creatures, and a higher value on the soul than on the body. He does not rely on the notion of an immortal rational soul or the *imago Dei* to characterise a body as an actual human living body. He does not acknowledge a nonbodily entity (like a soul) that carries the essence of the real person. Kelsey (2009:285) emphatically states that “the real you is none other than this living human body that has been born of particular parents at a particular time and place in a particular society with its particular culture”. He breaks from theological anthropologies that, under the influence of Augustine, develop a single narrative in a linear, chronological fashion with a series of theological changes from “creation through estrangement from God in fall and sin to reconciliation with God, and through progressive sanctification to its destiny of eschatological glory” (Kelsey 2009:896). The concept of *imago Dei* then serves as an organising principle of continuity for these theological anthropologies. He does not believe in the Fall or in the existence of a

historic couple, such as Adam and Eve. Kelsey is also very suspicious of the overemphasis of “the interior psychology of sin” as introduced into theology by Augustine through his notion of the inner man. Instead, he appeals to humans to be wise in their practices in the way they interact with other humans, with social institutions, and other nonhuman creatures.

Kelsey takes note of the naturalist anthropology of Wesley Wildman and the notion of nonreductive physicalism in the work of Nancey Murphy. He does not make any reference to the idea of human uniqueness and personhood as expounded by Wentzel van Huyssteen. He does not refer to the body theology of James Nelson, nor does he refer to Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body; yet, he is aware of the work regarding theologies of the body by Benedict Ashley. He has taken full cognisance of the corporeal turn in various disciplines, and is completely open to dialogue in theological anthropology with other academic disciplines, and with the anthropological wisdom of other religious traditions. He is fully aware of the linguistic turn with his insight into the extraordinary emphasis in wisdom literature on the correct use of language, and the narrative connection between language and the way it is used in complex practices, as well as the living body’s capacity for language as it relates to a culture’s language. He is fully aware of the wisdom of the body. His is truly a theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh.

Chapter 6

Theology in the flesh - theological anthropology as embodied enquiry/sensing

We need to return to feeling the textures of life. Much of our experience...is an effort to get away from those textures, to fade into a stark, simple, solemn, puritanical, all-business routine that doesn't have anything so unseemly as sensuous zest.

With these words the renowned American poet, Diane Ackerman (1995:xviii) echoes those of Leslie Todres, psychotherapist and professor in Health Philosophy when he writes that the lived body endeavours to understand “the textures and aliveness of a ‘fleshly’ world that is relevant to persons”. Ackerman continues:

We like to think that we are finely evolved creatures, in suit-and-tie or pantyhose-and-chemise, who lived millennia and mental detours away from the cave, but that is not something our bodies are convinced of...We still stake out or mark our territories...We still jockey for position and power. We still create works of art to enhance our senses...We still ache fiercely with love, lust, loyalty and passion. And we still perceive the world, in all its gushing beauty and terror, right on our pulses. There is no other way.

David Kelsey (2009:162) alludes to the “textures of life” when he refers to the created proximate context as “humankind’s lived world in its concrete everydayness”, and the dignity that is inherent to this everydayness, where the perfect, real and authentic human is the “ordinary everyday human person”. He alludes to the “textures of a fleshly world” when he sees the proximate context as “inherently ambiguous” — filled with “the possibility of our well-being” as humans and at the same time holding the potential of pain, loss and death (Kelsey 2009:202). He alludes to the richness of life when he views the proximate context not as anthropocentric, but as an “entire living web of creatures, human and nonhuman” (Kelsey 2009:118). He acknowledges this textured life when he anchors his theological anthropology in the doctrine of creation and in the practical wisdom of Job.

In the previous chapters I have endeavoured to answer the questions asked in the introduction: Was there truly a turn towards the body opposed to a turn away from the body? How did the corporeal turn manifest in other disciplines? How were, and are bodies portrayed in southern Africa and how important are these bodily experiences in evaluating the corporeal turn? What were the perceptions of the body in the early Church leading up to the

Reformation, and how did it influence contemporary theological thought? What influenced the focus on the body in Reformed and Roman Catholic theology in the twentieth century, and does it constitute a corporeal turn? How did contemporary theological anthropology develop and how does the body and experiences of the body feature in theological anthropology? Is there a contemporary theological anthropology that consistently takes the body seriously and if so, how can it integrate the corporeal turn? The quest for a theological anthropology that takes the body seriously is also a quest for a theological anthropology that has a feeling and sensitivity to the “textures of life”. The sentiment of the flesh is also a sentiment of life.

6.1 Evaluating the corporeal turn in theology

All these questions endeavoured to open deeper and deeper levels of inquiry, not only into what the body is and how it is experienced, but specifically into the question of how the corporeal turn manifests in theology from a southern African perspective. I have discovered in the theological anthropology of David Kelsey a theological anthropology that has a sentiment of life and a sentiment of the flesh. It consistently employs the body as an organising principle. In part one, *Created: Living on Borrowed Breath* he answers the question on what humans are by way of a theology of birth (reading the narrative of having been born as a living body in tandem with being given a living body by God); developing the notion of a personal living body (God personalises human creatures) and putting forward the idea of flourishing bodies (humans flourish by being wise in the here-and-now quotidian world). In part two, *Consummated: Living on borrowed Time* he explores the continuity and dramatic discontinuity between the pre- and post-Easter body of Jesus. He also develops the notion of “eschatologically fully consummated living human personal bodies” where he sets out what he coherently conceives glorified bodies to be.

In part three, *Reconciled: Living by Another’s Death* he holds that humans are reconciled and eschatologically consummated through the bodily actions of Jesus as human creature, where he enacts his own creaturely being as a living human personal body. Kelsey (2009:609) writes that God relates to humans through the incarnation of Jesus who is “as one amongst us at once both our ultimate and proximate contexts”. Kelsey (2009:900) describes the theocentric portrayal of human existence in his theological anthropology as “a whole-in-complexity”. His theological anthropology is a radical break from conventional Christian

anthropology that employs the *imago Dei* as organising principle and as the fundamental feature that distinguishes humans from animals and makes them distinctively human. Kelsey only introduces the concept of *imago Dei* in the codas at the end of his book, where he offers a Christological interpretation of the *imago Dei*, whereby the image of God is the concrete person of Jesus Christ and not some general property that humans possess in contrast to other nonhuman creatures. Jesus Christ is the “imager of God in his humanity” and is the “grammatical paradigm” of human being (Kelsey 2009:1009). Humans, as finite living mysteries that image the triune living mystery are the “imagers of the image of God”.

6.1.1 Theological anthropology and the corporeal turn

In a way Kelsey’s theological anthropology can be applied as a “template” for theological anthropology, one that is open to the insights from other disciplines, including both social sciences and natural sciences, even though that is not what it endeavours to be. McDougal (2011:57) sees his theological anthropology as an important correction to the “value anthropocentrism” of premodern (and some late modern) Christian theological anthropologies based on their interpretation of the notion of *imago Dei*, whereby humans are considered to be more important than other nonhuman creatures, also by focusing on the rational soul and by denigrating the physical body. She also views the proposals in Kelsey’s theological anthropology as a “conceptual compass” enabling theological anthropology to stay on course without being normative in claiming that this is the way to do theological anthropology (McDougal 2011:70). Kelsey wants to indicate a theological direction with a certain practical wisdom. But to what extent does he take note of and incorporate the corporeal turn in his theological anthropology? It is clear from his work that he has taken extensive note of the developments in evolutionary biology, for example in his description of eschatologically consummated personal bodies, and his refusal to accept the fall of anyone like Adam and Eve in the light of evolution and the origin of all living species. He also refers to the insights from psychology, although he is sceptical of applying psychological evaluations of personhood and human characteristics to a theological notion of personhood or his concept of personal bodies.

Kelsey (2009:7) is, however, quite frank that while theological anthropology could be an exercise in “conceptual bridge building” with other “strategically selected secular conversation partners” from anthropological wisdom and appropriate sciences, as well as

different religious traditions, his theological anthropology deliberately focuses on the “theological end of the bridge”. He also recognises the importance of issues such as race, gender and sex as part of the human’s “quotidian personal identities”, but considers these to be topics for another time and another project (Kelsey 2011:80). His acknowledgement of dialogue with strategically selected partners from other disciplines resonates with the notion of transversal rationality as introduced by Wentzel van Huyssteen, although he does not refer to his work in his theological anthropology. He neither refers to the body theology of James Nelson or the feminist theologians that took up Nelson’s work, or to Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body. He does, however, refer to the theologies of the body of Benedict Ashley and to the theological anthropologies of Nancey Murphy and Wesley Wildman. It does not appear as if the later developments in body theology/theology of the body had an impact on his work, although he does take note of the importance of the body/embodiment (the corporeal turn) in the work of theologians in the beginning of this century (2000s), as influenced by the corporeal turn in other disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, cognitive science and evolutionary biology.

It is clear from the enquiry in the first chapter of this thesis, regarding an interdisciplinary perspective on the corporeal turn, that it is not tenable to speak only of a corporeal turn. As the corporeal turn gathered momentum after the Second World War, spurred by the ideas of the French phenomenological philosophers, it gained insights from social sciences and the humanities (sociology, psychology), and later, also from natural sciences, and in particular cognitive science. It incorporated insights from cognitive science, evolutionary biology, palaeoanthropology, and linguistic philosophy, evolving towards the 1990s into a corporeal-linguistic turn; or what I refer to as a third-generation corporeal turn. Kelsey’s theological anthropology does integrate this corporeal-linguistic turn, although not as extensively as it could, mainly because of its explicitly stated focus on the theological end of the interdisciplinary bridge. This leaves a “gap” in his theological anthropology that gives rise to the first opportunity for filling the clearing through insights gained from various disciplines where a deeper understanding of the body has been developed (as captured in the corporeal-linguistic turn), as well as other contemporary theological anthropologies that have incorporated ideas of the body and embodiment.

6.1.2 Theological anthropology and body theology/theology of the body

It also appears that, with the exception of Benedict Ashley's theologies of the body, the contribution of James Nelson's body theology and the theology of the body of Pope John Paul II are largely ignored in the work of David Kelsey. Similarly, this is also true regarding the work of other theologians (Van Huyssteen, Wildman, Murphy, LeRon Shults), who incorporated the corporeal turn (second or third generation) into their theological anthropology, but bypassed the contribution of body theology/theology of the body. Both Nelson's body theology, and Pope John Paul II's theology of the body developed as an effort to rectify the impact of the Cartesian dualism; it developed in reaction to the sexual revolution, with both using, for example, homosexuality as a test case. Nelson's body theology was at first coined as a sexual theology with an extensive focus on human sexuality. He developed his body theology as a Christian ethicist, implying that his body theology does not, therefore, have a deep grounding in any specific doctrine. (He does refer to body theology as an incarnational theology, but without any deep systematic exploration of the doctrine of incarnation).

Pope John Paul II developed his thoughts on a theology of the body as systematic theologian and philosopher, and while it entails a systematic discussion of concepts, such as original solitude, original unity, original nakedness, original shame, the spousal meaning of the body, the resurrection of the body, the mystery of spousal love, and the discussion of ethical problems, its main purpose is the defence of *Humanae Vitae* – the unitive and procreative meaning of the conjugal act within the divine plan for human love as “an adequate anthropology”. *Humanae Vitae* is considered to be the specific moral application of this adequate anthropology in married life, with a special focus on the question of contraception. The beauty of sex can never be separated from the profound spousal meaning of the body. The pope's theology of the body easily finds a home in moral theology, as does the body theology of Nelson, which remains confined to Christian ethics. The impression is that the focus of the body in their separate theologies is predominantly employed to develop moral/ethical positions. This is understandable in light of the reaction of both theologies to the influences of the sexual revolution, but nevertheless their focus remains on the issue of human sexuality (within Christian ethics/ moral theology) without a deep enough enquiry into the body.

Kelsey (2009:118) makes it clear that his theological anthropology is not about “anthropocentric moralizing”, but he admits that it is not possible to avoid moralising or moralistically distorting concepts of faith and unfaith, since the logic of Christian belief is centred around sin and salvation/reconciliation. He wants to move away from a theological anthropology that is structured around humans as “morally responsible agents”, and that ignores the “entire living web of creatures, human and nonhuman”. In such an anthropocentric theological anthropology, the focus is on sin, and how humans can overcome sin and become morally acceptable. If this structure becomes the organising principle, then this theological anthropology becomes “exhaustively concerned with human failure, an exclusively intrahuman defect or distortion (sin) that is in need of correction”. By moving away from the “value anthropocentrism” of premodern theological anthropologies, Kelsey, at the same time moves away from the overemphasis on “the interior psychology of sin”, and towards an emphasis on “a trinitarian grammar of sin”, where Christians are motivated to form their identity based on their wise actions for the benefit of the whole web of living creatures in their concrete, everyday life-world (McDougal 2011:58). This “interior psychology of sin” was introduced into theology by Augustine’s new and radical discourse on “mental interiority” with concepts, such as inner man, inner voice, inner heart, and the fragmentation of the self. His theological anthropology was also a radical break from the doctrine of the double creation to the doctrine of creation and fall. His focus on inwardness broke the connection between the human person with his/her body reflecting the cosmos.

Kelsey breaks with Augustine’s theological anthropology by rejecting any event such as the fall or any historical couple like Adam and Eve, and by moving away from “value anthropocentrism” and the overemphasis on the interiority of sin. Kelsey introduces his trinitarian theological anthropology (with its open-ended, cylindrical shaped, triple helix structure, and Christological interpretation of the *imago Dei*) in opposition to premodern theological anthropologies that develop a single narrative in a linear, chronological fashion, moving from creation to the fall (sin and estrangement from God), to reconciliation and eschatological glory, believing that Adam and Eve were created as adults, and that all humans are descended from them. A contemporary theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh (such as espoused by Kelsey) should take note of the insights in the work of Wildman, who holds the view that the body makes religion possible (with morality as part of religious experience), as well as the insights of Wentzel van Huyssteen, who argues that the evolution of religion is closely related to the evolution of morality. It should also take cognisance of

how moral concepts are structured metaphorically (linguistic philosophy) and how morality, for example, as the presence of empathy works in the brain (interpersonal neurobiology). This is connected to the first opportunity identified in the previous section, namely, to open a deeper enquiry into the body, with insights shared by other academic disciplines.

While both the body theology of Nelson and the theology of the body of Pope John Paul II were a reaction to the sexual revolution of the 1960s to early 1980s (with its roots in the 1930s), one of the elements that sets them apart is their appreciation of desire or the lack thereof. There is a deeper appreciation of the goodness of the body with all its desires in the work of Nelson, and in the work of the feminist theologians, Isherwood and Stuart, who developed some of his ideas. In stark contrast, the theology of the body of Pope John Paul II and that of Benedict Ashley reflects a deep disconnect between the body and its desires, even though their aim is to undo the ravishes of the Cartesian dualism and view the body as God's good creation.

Nelson himself views desire at the heart of spirituality with desire being an expression of the hunger for wholeness. He also acknowledges the ambivalence towards desire in Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, since desire is so bodily, visceral and sexual that it cannot be part of spirituality. Kelsey (2009:268) is quite clear that desire is not "a deformity of human creatureliness", because humans desire what they need. Each living human body functions in a network of relations with other living bodies; these living bodies have an influence on each other, sometimes inhibiting them and sometimes violating them. The implication is that desire and neediness are an integral part of the notion of a living human body. He is adamant that "to overcome desirousness would amount to overcoming creatureliness itself", and that would be unfaithful to the Creator.

This ambivalence has clearly been exposed in Chapter 3: *The body in Christianity: the Church Fathers till the Reformation* where it emerges that it is too simplistic to refer to centuries of deliberations with regard to the connection between body and soul as pure dualism. A complex picture emerges where there is a deep appreciation of the body on one side and a vehement hatred of the body and its desires on the other, a picture embedded in a complex world-view of the body as reflection of the cosmos or a sophisticated map of mental interiority. The dominant anthropology that emerged out of this complex picture of bodily perceptions, is that desire is inextricably connected to sin with a deep disconnect between the

body and sexuality, between the body and its desires, and with the human being becoming detached from the rest of creation.

The theology of Augustine had a profound influence on this suspicion and disconnect of the body and its desires, with Augustine referring to sexual desires as a fitting punishment (*poena reciproca*) for the crime of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Kelsey (2009:31) is also aware of this ambiguity in premodern theological anthropologies, where despite their affirmation of the goodness of creation (and the body), there is an internal logic that "entails suspicion, fear, and disparagement of the body". This ambiguity, suspicion and fear is apparent in the tirade of Benedict Ashley (1985:435) against human beings who do not realise themselves authentically — "the Don Juan, those who use contraception, those who seek to have children by artificial means, the promiscuous person, the frequenter of prostitutes and the masturbator". Homosexuals are described as people who "do not face honestly their own psychological abnormality and seek its cure or make the best of it without exploiting others or degrading their dignity as persons" (Ashley 1985:447). His diatribe is all the more surprising in the light of his in depth understanding of the body and embodiment within interdisciplinary conversation, and his view of the body as the "most complex and highly unified primary unit in the material universe" (Ashley 1985:696).

This disconnect between the body and its desires is also reflected in Echeverria's interpretation of the pope's theology of the body with regard to homosexuality, where he describes sexual immorality as "an alienation of the body from the consciously experiencing self, because the body is used as a mere instrument in the service of that self" (Meiring 2013:123). He regards homosexuality as "objectively disordered", because it motivates a man to intrinsically immoral homosexual acts. The guiding star in the theology of the body of Pope John Paul II is that of the radical gift of the body, where gift expresses the deepest truth of the human body. The illusion of the sexual revolution is that the body can be used for mere pleasure without "gifting". While the exploitation of another living human body can be considered as evil, the suspicion of pleasure lies very close to a fear of desire, which has its roots in the disconnect between the body and its desires. The challenge for a theological anthropology that has the sentiment of the flesh is to overcome this suspicion and fear of desire, and to present a coherent portrayal of the goodness of the body with its desires, without immediately and easily labelling desire as immoral or promiscuous.

The disconnect between the body and its desires is a dominant theme and problem that has survived throughout the history of Christianity; it is sadly still prevalent in contemporary theological thought. It is but one consequence of the ambiguity regarding the body and soul, and of a bodily life before God, as illustrated in Chapter 3, *The body in Christianity: the Church Fathers till the Reformation*. It is, however, not a full reflection of the complexity of theological thought in the history of Christianity surrounding the body and soul, and how, for example, it ties in with the doctrines of creation, incarnation and resurrection. The body theology of James Nelson and Pope John Paul II's theology of the body are important corrections to the negative inheritance in theology of the Cartesian dualism, which placed higher value on thoughts/mind and disregarded the crucial importance of the body. A reference like Nelson's (1992:117) about the influence of the "anti-body tradition in the Christian West" is too broad and does not take into consideration the long history in Christianity of hesitantly seeking some kind of "truth" about the relationship between body and soul — how the body-soul connection came into being through creation, how the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ reflects this connection, and what would happen to the relationship of body and soul after the resurrection.

The theological thoughts of Athanasius in the fourth century, for example, is not "anti-body" when he argues that body and soul are part of the created world, and that the body is good since God cannot create evil; he states that it "naturally belongs and properly exists with its soul" (Pettersen 1990:21). In Athanasius' anthropology the body has a functional and substantive nature, a way of being in the world and being in a relationship with the cosmos, the person self, and the Creator (Pettersen 1990:79). It is too easy to cast all of Augustine's work as "anti-body" by only referring to his thoughts and bodily experiences of sexual desire, and not take into consideration his nuanced writings on "mental interiority", where a human being is perceived as a mixture of soul and body, and where the soul (which includes the mind and will) senses the body and the world it lives in, with these sensations leaving impressions of "the bodily realm in the memory" (Nightingale 2011:128). In this way, Augustine was searching for his "self" in his memory, formed by the interface of the body and soul, which defies the boundaries between the outer man and the inner man, implying that "the mind is not fully inner, nor is the body fully outer" (Nightingale 2011:128). As mentioned before, Kelsey (2009:31) does acknowledge the ambiguity in premodern theological anthropologies where there is an internal logic that "entails suspicion, fear, and disparagement of the body". He also acknowledges the influence of patristic writings on his

theological thoughts (Kelsey 2009:6) and was inspired by Irenaeus in developing the notion of flourishing bodies in his theological anthropology, writing that “the glory of God is a flourishing body” (Kelsey 2009:310).

The challenge for theological anthropology as embodied sensing is to take into full consideration the complexity in theological thinking behind the ambiguity regarding the body. Such a theological anthropology should not disregard the important and fruitful contribution of earlier theologians by carelessly labelling it as “anti-body”; but explore it as part of its own “hesitant seeking” to understand the body while interweaving the insights of earlier voices with that of, for example, cognitive science. Nancey Murphy advocates a nonreductive physicalism to explain higher human capacities (earlier contributed to the presence of a soul) and writes that the dualism between body and soul throughout Christian history is a result of cultural influences, and that poor translations contributed to this dualism since there is no clear teaching on the metaphysical make-up of a person (Murphy 2006:37). Kelsey is acutely aware of Murphy’s work and argues that “any account of metaphysical status of either type of power must take into account the physical grounding in human beings’ living bodies”; it cannot be considered as higher because it transcends the body and is therefore located in a nonmaterial soul (Kelsey 2009:266).

The essence of a person is not located in a nonbodily entity that is superior to the body, but according to Kelsey (2009:285) “the real you is none other than this living human body that has been born of particular parents at a particular time and place in a particular society with its particular culture”. Kelsey (2009:292) does not make a distinction between a “mortal body” and “immortal rational soul” when claiming that Job had been born a living body (he was a living body) and that he had been given a body by God (he had a living body) and resists any allusion that this constitutes a “metaphysical dualist theological anthropology”. Le Ron Shults (2003:5) advocates a reforming and reformative theological anthropology where each generation has the task of interpreting the power of the gospel through dialogue with “contemporary philosophical and scientific interpretations of the world within the living, dynamic biblical tradition” and this interpretation should include the rich layers of thinking about the body (and its relationship to soul) in the work of the early Church Fathers, in the mystical thinking of the Dessert Fathers, and within female mysticism during the Middle Ages.

Another issue that emerges from a Roman Catholic theology of the body, which presents a challenge for a contemporary theological anthropology is the suspicion of technology. There is a divergence on this issue in Benedict Ashley and Pope John Paul II's theology of the body. The pope's defence of *Humanae Vitae* is also a reflection of the fear in the Roman Catholic Church that man will extend his domination over the totality of life through technology. This includes control of the body and the transmission of life through humanity's technological mastery over nature, which, according to Waldstein is at the core of the debate regarding contraception and abortion. Ashley has a different view. He supports the notion of co-creative stewardship, and is of the opinion that "we must recreate the world which has created us" (Ashley 1985:5). He develops ideas of process thought in his theologies of the body and advocates that humans should take charge together of a world in process. He defines human beings as "creative, communicating, socially intelligent animals, motivated by conscious and unconscious emotions and purposes, capable of achieving scientific knowledge through which we can control our own behaviour, our environment and our evolution...we are limited by our past...yet we continue to strive to transcend these limits and so to build a novel future" (Ashley 1985:40). Overcoming the mistrust and fear of technology poses another challenge for a contemporary theological anthropology. One such novel frontier to cross is the notion of embodiment in multiple worlds, and multiple identities in cyberspace, and how that connects to the notion of personhood.

The second opportunity that arises for a contemporary theological anthropology that takes the body seriously is to give full recognition to bodily experience as a source of revelation alongside that of Scripture and tradition. The focus on experience is one of the major contributions of body theology, even though there is a difference in opinion between Nelson, Isherwood and Stuart on the one side, and Pope John Paul II, and a moral theologian like Echeverria on the other (who interprets the pope's theology of the body in his own work), regarding the "weight" of experience compared to tradition and Scripture. The pope interprets experience from the perspective of faith, in contrast to theologians who want to elevate experience in opposition to the objective content of faith. According to Waldstein, the pope holds that faith remains the comprehensive form of Christian experience, and cannot be replaced by experience. Faith has primacy in Christian experience, which does not imply that experience is unimportant. Experience remains relevant when "a living faith deeply transforms human experience by introducing the person to a path of union with God" (Waldstein 2006:82). Echeverria's viewpoint is that one cannot appeal to Christian

experience against the Church in an effort to deny its common faith, and appeals to the Dutch Reformed theologian, Bavinck in arguing that it is impossible to use experience to make truth claims against the living God.

Nelson considers “lived experience” to be the most neglected in theology, and views theology as a “second moment”. Theology as “second moment” involves understanding our “first moment” experience as fully as we can” (Nelson 2004:13). The source of his viewpoint is liberation theology, which reminds us that “all theologies are bound to specific histories and life experiences”, and that theology is not primarily an intellectual task of an individual person, but is in its core a social enterprise as an authentic “outgrowth of life in community” (Nelson 2004:12). He is adamant that bodily experiences should be treated as important theological data, since the body is an active source of meaning, and often “speaks its mind”. The body theology/theology of the body of Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians tends to diverge on the point of accepting the body and the experiences of the body as a source of revelation, and taking the body seriously — as a site of revelation and knowledge, as well as a site of resistance against various forms of oppression emanating from patriarchal heterosexism.

Kelsey does not pay much attention in his theological anthropology to bodily experiences and leaves a clearing in his theological anthropology for the integration of bodily experiences as a source of revelation and knowledge. His focus is rather on the wise practices of humans in their interaction with other humans, nonhuman creatures, and social institutions, with humans being the social, intentional, bodied enactors of these complex practices. Being given a living body by God makes them accountable to God for their bodied response to God. His viewpoint is that God calls us to be wise, and our appropriate response is faith, where faith is understood as “wise human action in the quotidian for its well-being for its own sake” (Kelsey 2009:310). Kelsey himself does portray his theological anthropology as a relentless exercise in secondary theology, where secondary theology is more concerned with the critical reflection on received authoritative theological traditions, and attempts to put new formulations of theological themes forward to which primary theology can appeal and respond. Primary theology is very concrete and analytical, and is employed in the expression of the communal practices of Christian communities, such as prayer, liturgy, ethical analysis and moral judging. The appeal to experience in body theology (as influenced by liberation and feminist theology) can be interpreted as an outflow of primary theology. The challenge,

however, is to incorporate experience as a source of revelation into theological anthropology as secondary theology. This is where the second opportunity arises.

Nelson (2010: xvi) makes the observation that it is no longer possible to maintain that “faith has received its truth quite independently of our own experiences”. One of the key tenets of his body theology is that it does not begin with doctrines or creeds or problems in tradition, but with the concrete, fleshly experience of life. It is not merely about what theology has to say about the body, but how we as body-selves reflect and participate in the reality of God. This presents another challenge to a contemporary theology that takes the body and its experiences seriously. This is connected to the second opportunity for a contemporary theological anthropology to incorporate bodily experience as a source of revelation and knowledge. The relational theological anthropology of LeRon Shults with its focus on continued reformation and on the reconstruction of doctrines fits into the mould of reflecting on the reality of God from the body. He puts new formulations forward for the reconstruction of the doctrines of sin, human nature, and *imago Dei*, as well as reforming Christology based on recent insights with regard to the body from neurobiology, psychology, evolutionary biology, cosmology, and cultural anthropology. Van Huyssteen (2010a:152) follows a similar approach when he argues that “a more embodied theology that takes seriously our own evolution of our ideas about God and Christ will be able to embrace fully...the incarnational nature not only of Christ, but of the Christian faith itself” and his aspiration to reimagine the personhood of Jesus in scientific and theological terms.

Nancey Murphy refers to the concept of bodily identity to explain that a person’s identity will only be understood in terms of the person’s own body. This opens a parallel line of thought (to that of Nelson) that can be explored, namely, that faith can only be received in dependence of a person’s bodily experiences, namely that a person’s theology is closely related to his/her bodily identity. The positioning statements of various theologians allude to this idea. James Nelson (2004:16) positions himself as an alcoholic, but also as “a Protestant Christian, white, male, North American, of Scandinavian descent, military veteran, middle-class, married, parent, grandparent, retired seminary professor”. David Kelsey (2009:6) states that his thoughts are founded in Christian traditions and practices that originated in the New Testament and patristic writings. It was formed by the reformation in Switzerland and Scotland, by the Enlightenment, and by religious revivals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in America. At the same time, as a North American Presbyterian, his

anthropological questions are also shaped by traditions and ideas he shares with other “middle-class, well-educated males in a late-capitalist, consumerist society”. Sally McFague (1993:viii) positions herself as “a white, middle-class, American Christian woman writing to first-world, privileged, mainstream Christians”. Benedict Ashley (1985:11) writes that “I must frankly acknowledge that I view my bodily self and the bodily world which is mine from within the encircling horizon of my life stance as a Roman Catholic Christian living in twentieth century, technological United States of America, looking certainly forward toward personal death in the not too distant future and perhaps to the rapid decadence of the American culture which has been my world”.

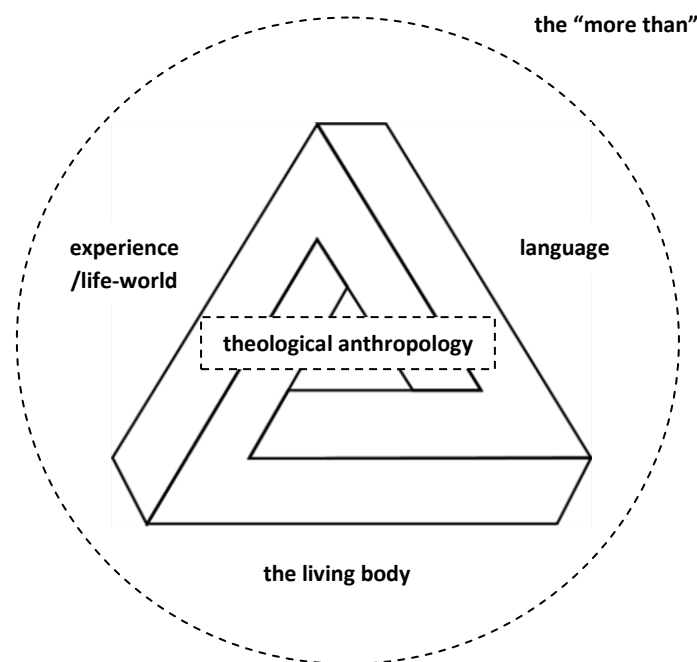
Their own purpose in positioning themselves through these statements is most likely not connected to an awareness of their bodily identity (with the exception of Ashley), but it does refer to bodily experiences, which, in turn open up the enquiry into the relation between their bodily identity and the words that emanate in a specific theological language from their bodies. My own positioning statement in the introduction as a narrative theologian and as a white, Afrikaans speaking, middle-aged homosexual South African male from a Dutch Reformed background, growing up in apartheid society, reflects this idea of the link between bodily identity and theology. This idea opens up an enquiry into the bodily identity of, for example, Johan Calvin and his theology (exploring the link between his own medical problems and distrust of the body), and for that matter, the bodily identity of every theologian and his words of theology. What for example is the link between Desmond Tutu’s bodily identity (his body image and body movement, body stature, illnesses and marks on his body) and his struggle for the underdog, the oppressed and marginalised people in society, and the way this is expressed in his theological thoughts? The minimum requirement is that this idea should create the awareness that no theological anthropology is independent of the body it springs from.

In the twentieth century body theology/theology of the body introduced the crucial notion of the body and bodily experiences into theology as a significant correction to Cartesian dualism, patriarchal heterosexism, and centuries’ ambivalence towards the body. It was at the forefront of incorporating the corporeal turn, even when compared to many other academic disciplines. Its stimulus was the sexual revolution and the impact of liberation theology which opened many enquiries into issues of race, poverty, power structures in society, gender and heterosexism, sexual orientation, and ecology. The limitation of body theology/theology of

the body is that it primarily remains focussed on issues of human sexuality and confines their profound insights to Christian ethics/moral theology. A transition should be made from primary theology to secondary theology, and this is where theological anthropology provides a wider and deeper conceptual basis for enquiries and reflections on the body in theology. It can incorporate the insights from other disciplines, from body theology/theology of the body, as well as the different voices from the history of Christianity and concrete life-worlds. I can but only agree with Kelsey's assessment that theological anthropology is "the point at which Christian and secular thought most easily and immediately engage each other in the service and also practices within the common life of pluralistic culture" with the most direct bearing on practical life (Kelsey 2009:7).

6.2 A model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing

Keeping in mind the limitations in the focus of body theology/theology of the body, as well as the clearings identified in the theological anthropology of David Kelsey (a wider incorporation of the corporeal-linguistic turn from other disciplines, as well as other theological anthropologies, and the recognition of bodily experience as a source of revelation and knowledge), I propose the following model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing:



A contemporary theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh and a sensitivity to the textures of life, functions within the intricate and complex connection of the living body, language, and experiencing in a concrete life-world. The “more than” in the model can express a variety of ideas and concepts, expressing amongst others the notion of eccentric existence in the Trinitarian theological anthropology of David Kelsey. The word “sensing” is an effort to move away from the subject/object distinction to a more participatory approach and, as Eugene Gendlin (1997:15) phrases it, “to speak from how we interact bodily in our situation”. It is, however, quite difficult to bypass the subject/object distinction altogether, since we obsessively tend to objectify ourselves, other creatures and events in our concrete situation. The “more than” is also an attempt to illustrate that we are “more than” the obsessive objectifying of objects, events and each other. It is furthermore an effort to express the notions of sentiment of the flesh and sensitivity to the textures of life. It moves away from a pure cognitive, objective approach to sensing, derived from the Latin word *sensus*, which expresses the faculty of thought, feeling and meaning.

The term “sensing” endeavours to capture what Gendlin conveys with the word “focussing” and Todres with the expression “embodied understanding”. Todres (2011:2) defines “embodied understanding” as “a form of knowing that evokes the possibility of living, bodily relevant textures and meanings”. He in turn builds upon Gendlin’s notion of focussing, which is about paying attention to the words that work, responding to an experience where language captures the felt sense of a word in the body. It is a focus on texture where a phenomenon is not merely a theoretical description of an occurrence, but a live moment that was embodied by a person in a concrete situation. This intricate relationship between the living body, language, and experiencing in a concrete life-world as expressed in the notion of embodied sensing, is more complex than the incorporation of facts about the body into secondary theology in the process of reformulating doctrines in a theoretical and cognitive fashion with various applications in primary theology, for example moral theology/Christian ethics. It is about the sensing (feeling, thinking, meaning-making) of words about God (Scripture, doctrines and tradition), and how it resonates with a lived body in a concrete situation, and how the experiencing of that body in its life-world in turn informs the speaking of words about God (interpretation of Scripture and tradition in doctrines). It is an ongoing process of embodying theology and theologising (from) the body in the process of making enquiries within theological anthropology about the embodied existence of human and nonhuman creatures before God.

6.2.1 The living body

Nancey Murphy advocates a non-reductive physicalist theological anthropology and views humans as “complex physical organisms, imbued with the legacy of thousands of years of culture, and, most importantly, blown by the Breath of God’s Spirit” (Murphy 2006:37). Higher human capacities (also expressed as “soul”) can partially be explained by brain functions, but a full explanation should take human social relations, cultural phenomena, and our relationship with God into account. Kelsey views human existence centred outside themselves in the Triune God in an existential orientation to their proximate and ultimate contexts and with regard to their identity, being, value and destiny (the “more than” of human existence). Humans are not only a result of culture and nature, but they are understood as creation. It is as creatures, shaped by the created cosmos that humans are living bodies.

Kelsey expounds the idea of a “living body” as standing in a dynamic relationship with its proximate context, with its biology and with its ecology (the environments it interacts with). It is contained by its skin, but also extends beyond its skin to the influences it has on its environment. He portrays a living body as a system that continuously scans its environment for possible threats and opportunities, and simultaneously explores its environment for sources of energy. Kelsey emphasises that the notion of living body encompasses biological, cultural and social life, as well as the capacity to develop more complex systems of social and cultural life forms. He also incorporates the implications of “the evolutionary biology of carbon-based life” into the notion of living body, which implies that energy sources have to be infinite or reproduction should end in a proximate context without death (Kelsey 2009:249). He follows a clear naturalistic approach to explain the difference between an actual living body and a potential living body, and does not rely on the concept of an immortal soul or the image of God to explain the difference between the two concepts.

A clearing exists in Kelsey’s theological anthropology to incorporate insights from other academic disciplines into the notion of the living body. It also illustrates the necessity of continued interdisciplinary dialogue in the ongoing process of further developing and expanding the notion of the living body. Kelsey has focussed mainly on implications derived from evolutionary biology and carbon-based biochemistry, which then informs his theology of creation and theology of birth, as well as his portrayal of glorified bodies in explaining the notion of living bodies. He feels strongly that the living body covers both quotidian (the body

in the proximate context) and glorified bodies (the body in the ultimate context), and admits that the description of glorified bodies sometimes borders on theological science fantasy. Kelsey's (2009:554) description of glorified bodies, as bodies with a "non-carbon-based-biochemistry" that is no longer subjected to evolution and "an integral set of energy systems that does not disintegrate or die", does sound like theological science fiction. It sounds as fantastical as Augustine's description of glorified bodies with all the inner organs visible (the stomach, intestines, womb, and so forth), where there is admiration for each other's beauty without lust. Such theological thought experiments are necessary when developing insights from other disciplines within a postfoundational theology.

It is therefore necessary to fill this clearing in Kelsey's theological anthropology with the insights gained from other academic disciplines. These insights include:

- an acknowledgment of the species-specific placement of humans in history, and our common creaturehood with other primates;
- an understanding that the evolution of language is only possible within the context of a sensory-kinetic world;
- the notion that sexuality, imagination and morality are intimately linked to the embodied evolutionary nature of humans;
- the notion that our moral dimensions are linked to our prehistoric roots, and our moral concepts (for example freedom, compassion, justice, tolerance, and virtue) are structured metaphorically. These moral metaphors have a grounding in our bodies and in our social interactions;
- the notion that mirror-neurons in the brain provide a strong explanation of how the perception of the emotion in one individual activates neural mechanisms in an observer, allowing the observer to resonate with the emotional state (empathy) of the individual being observed. Human patterns of attachment are shaped by the processes of neural systems and these attachments shape neuron patterns;
- the notion that the body can also be referred to as a system of "meaning-seeking", which constantly interacts with its environment in an effort to seek coherence;
- the notion that the body is always consciousness embodied, meaning that the embodied mind is part of a living body and human cognition is not only driven by the

experiences of the body, but also the crucial role of the body in providing resources for cognition;

- the notion that body image/body schema or the later concept of corporal-kinetic intentionality/corporal-kinetic patterning are aspects of the “meaning-seeking body”;
- the notion that the whole body stores memory, including traumatic events, which research in molecular biology has found can be inherited from previous generations;
- an acknowledgment of the fundamental importance of touch for the physical, emotional, social and moral flourishing of humans, that is, the expression of tactile interaction is essential for the developing brain; and
- the notion that bodymind therapies can create an awareness of the intricate relationship between our bodies and our life-worlds, and open us up to the wisdom of our embodiment, and a sense of belonging with our bodies, that is, to be the bodies that we are. The body, therefore, can never merely be a vessel for the disembodied mind.

The challenge is to expand, for example, Kelsey’s (2009:250) nine core themes “in a theology of human creatureliness”, in which humans are born as “living bodies”, to coherently include the insights from other conversation partners. His core themes are mainly extracted from insights from evolutionary biology and carbon-based life:

- all energy systems are radically dependent on the free creativity of God for its continuous existence;
- God created actual human bodies able to live apart from their mothers’ bodies and not only physical possibilities;
- God relates to a variety of creatures in a way appropriate to their creaturely powers;
- a human living body is not determined by race or gender, but by the DNA they share;
- actual human living bodies are continuously changing and developing in various ways towards various outcomes for the rest of their lives as living human bodies;
- a human living body organises its energy for species-specific types of self-regulating behaviour that involves more complex, more long-range and more flexible modulated planning;
- centres of power located in actual living human bodies are finite;

- living human bodies are complex and inexhaustible objects of knowledge and God is self-committed to respect and nurture humans as living bodies rather than threatening to violate us.

Kelsey further develops the notion of living body into the “personal body” and “flourishing body”. It can be expanded to include, for example, the notion of the vulnerable body when speaking of sin, and how people carry trauma and other memories in their bodies, also from generation to generation. It is from this deeper interdisciplinary enquiry into the body that it is possible to reconstruct and reform certain doctrines in the way that, for example LeRon Shults and Van Huyssteen propose. It is, however, important to be aware that the theologian’s own body is intimately part of this process, and how, according to Todres’ appropriation of Gendlin’s ideas, “we use more than our thoughts when we think and how the lived body is full of fertile excess, intimate with crossing and bridges, textures and relationships that are the ‘stuff’ of understanding” (Todres 2011:14).

6.2.2 Language

It is clear from the exploration of the corporeal-linguistic turn that there exists a very close relationship between language, the body, and experiencing; it is sometimes a difficult and forced exercise to discuss them in isolation from each other. Kelsey is keenly aware of the importance of language in wisdom literature and the normative connection between the correct use of language and complex practices. He views humans as the social, intentional, bodied enactors of complex practices that include the use of language. Language is then an integral part of wise practices in which it is used in such a way that it remains true to the nature and purpose of the relevant practice, and responds to the realities of the larger public context. According to Kelsey, it is very important that language is not in a way that is false or deceitful, since distorting the practice through the deceitful use of language is to deform the quotidian created by God. He also acknowledges the interchange between a living body and its capacity for language, and the way in which language is intimately connected to a culture’s rituals, myths, symbols, and images.

In many premodern theological anthropologies, the use of language as a faculty of intelligence and consciousness was considered to be a higher power that transcends the body, and located in the nonmaterial soul. This was then used as an argument to explain why

humans were superior to other kinds of living bodies. Kelsey rejects this argument, stating that it is only as actual living human bodies that humans have the powers they do. All forms of “higher power” are located in living human bodies. Kelsey holds the view that a living human body is “personalised” (by merit of God relating to humans) through the medium of its ordinary languages. The proximate contexts of humans are public spaces with a “covenant-like social structure”, in which God addresses humankind and humans may or may not address God. God addresses them by creating them as living bodies and personal bodies with the ability to build relationships with others through the use of ordinary language — that “God...talks living human bodies into being personal” (Kelsey 2009:303). He argues that God speaks to personal living human bodies through ordinary language and humans have the ability to respond to God in their ordinary language.

A contemporary theological anthropology that takes the body seriously should also incorporate the insights from paleoanthropology and linguistic philosophy with regard to the role of language and the intimate connection with the body and experiencing. The ability to walk upright is the defining moment in hominid evolutionary history, since the ability to use signals and language developed from this and in turn, the human brain has been reorganised in response to language. This was not a static process, but the result of a whole body gestural system where language developed out of a primate communications system enhanced by constant bipedalism. We can only understand the evolution of language within the context of a sensory-kinetic world. Van Huyssteen (2010a:151) argues that there is a co-evolution of language and brain, and that religious imagination must be viewed as an integrated part of human cognition, since “the evolution of our linguistic, aesthetic, and religious disposition was also firmly embedded in our human bodies”. Linguistic philosophy has focussed the attention on the challenge in languaging human experiences, and the effort it takes to stay true to the truth of experiences through the use of language. The living body is part of language as a discourse, which Gendlin (1997:28) expresses in his assertion that “speaking is a special case of bodily interaction”. According to Gendlin, the body has an implicit knowing function that includes knowing the language, and how it is relevant to a concrete situation. This kind of bodily knowing (which includes language) is about a living body continuously interacting with its environment. Gendlin (1997:27) also makes the assertion that the living body is its own next step, that “a living body is a self-organizing process” in the sense that it implies its next bit of life-process. The challenge is to move beyond the subject/object

distinction and to speak from how we interact bodily in a specific situation, trying to express the bodily sense of living in a concrete life-world, speaking from a “sensed experience”.

6.2.3 Experiencing in a concrete life-world

A second clearing that exists in Kelsey’s theological anthropology and in other contemporary theological anthropologies, is the lack of recognition of experience as a source of revelation and knowledge. Body theology, under the influence of liberation theology has brought this crucial aspect to the fore. Nelson views human bodily experience as important theological data in contemplating the reality of God, and describes it as the “first moment” with theology being the “second moment”. If theology or theological anthropology as “second moment” should incorporate bodily experiences in a concrete life-world (experiencing) as important theological data, the way in which we listen to the “voice” and wisdom of the body would be the challenge. It is not only about accumulating facts about the body, and what happens to the body under certain circumstances, but also how to access these bodily experiences, and how to language these experiences into theological words/concepts/doctrines. It is easier to make theological statements on how to live in the body, than listening to the body and from there reflect about human existence and the reality of God. The challenge in the latter position lies in the ability to put theological judgements and statements aside and to listen to interior dynamics of human bodily experience and the body as a “sense-making process”.

Theological anthropology as embodied sensing endeavours to capture this process of sense-making as an equal and authoritative source of revelation and knowledge on par with tradition and Scripture. Eugene Gendlin (1997:32) asserts that “experiencing is inherently sense-making”, and that sense-making is implicitly symbolised in the interactional events with other human and nonhuman creatures. These events are then elaborated through language which Gendlin refers to as “eventing”. His conclusion is that there can be no sense-making without experiencing and eventing, and in the context of Nelson’s argumentation there can be no sense-making of existence before God without experiencing and eventing (the elaboration of experience through language). And if all experiences are grounded in the body, the intimate and intricate connection between the living body, experience, and language is uncovered and it is within this intimate relationship that a contemporary theological anthropology as “second moment” develops its enquiries and articulations.

This process of “embodied sensing” is not necessarily an easy or transparent process, since as Gendlin (1997:17) puts it, in experience there is “the implicit language unable to come, struggling, trying to come” in the difficult process of languaging a particular sensed experience. There is a tension in the relationship between language and bodily experience. Gendlin refers to the “more” of bodily experiences meaning that language and experience cannot be replaced by each other, and that there is a part of experiencing that can never be fully language, even though it is affected by the use of language. Gendlin (1997:7) maintains that this “more” of bodily experiences “is always open beyond cognitive units [of language] and is always open for further living and action”. Theological anthropology as embodied sensing should also be aware that not all bodily experiences can be adequately captured in the cognitive units of theological language, that some experiences could probably never be analysed through the use of language, and that it could only be “sensed” through further living. Todres (2011:20) expresses this inability to language all experiences by referring to the body in its life-world “as the messenger of the unsaid”. Gendlin refers to the “felt sense” of bodily experiences, whereby he not only expresses the feeling of “the stuff inside”, but “the sentience of what is happening in one’s living in the outside” (Todres 2011:23). The challenge for a contemporary theological anthropology as embodied sensing is to capture this embodied experiencing, the “felt sense” of bodily experiences, and to listen to the “unsaid” of the body. Then theological anthropology as embodied sensing truly has a sentiment of the flesh and a sensitivity to the textures of life.

6.2.4 The “more than”

The “more than” can refer to a variety of ideas or concepts or theological thought experiments and articulations. Nancey Murphy argues that not all higher human capacities can be reduced to brain functions, and that our relationship with God is part of a more complete explanation. Wesley Wildman concludes that spiritual and religious experiences are a result of a network of bodily functions, sensory and neurological roots with a wide range of social impacts. Wentzel van Huyssteen (2010a:148) is acutely aware of the co-evolution of the human body, morality and religious awareness in the marking of human uniqueness, and holds that there is “a naturalness to religious imagination”. Fount LeRon Shults (2008:41) endeavours to understand the emergence of religious behaviour, and “the intense human desire to understand our place in the cosmos” and the challenge theological anthropology faces to engage in the “ongoing human struggle to make sense of noetic desire that shapes the

religious (and artistic and scientific) dimensions of human becoming” (LeRon Shults 2008:44).

David Kelsey refers to the “epistemic mysteriousness” of living human bodies, that not all manner of knowing of the human body can be exhausted, and that the Trinitarian formula of humans being created by “the Father through the Son” grounds our knowability “in the very life of God” (Kelsey 2009:268). Living human bodies are amazingly complex and in this sense they are “inexhaustible objects of knowledge”. This ties in with what Todres describes as “the unsaid” of the human body and the idea that not all human bodily experiences can be languaged. Todres (2011:185) also expresses the “unsaid” in the idea that the experiences of spirituality in everyday life “are grounded by the palpable lived experience of meeting a mystery that is always in the excess of the known”. His concept of the living body is that it is not merely an object encapsulated by skin, but that it is a subjectivity that is “intimately intertwined with what is there beyond the skin”.

There is a “more than” to the eventing of human bodily experiences in a concrete life-world; there is a “more than” to the richness of textured bodily life that cannot easily be conveyed into theological articulations. Kelsey expresses this “more than” in the notion of eccentric existence, and the continuity between physical human bodies and glorified bodies as “God-related bodies”, living in “the sociality of community-in-communion” where they are recognisable as an individual with unconditional dignity and unqualified respect. Kelsey (2009:1009) describes Jesus Christ as “uniquely God-related”, and it is as the “imagers of the image of God” that humans are finite living mysteries that image the triune living mystery. Theological anthropology as embodied sensing functions within the intricate and intimate bond of living body, experiencing (experience in a concrete life-world) and language, and at the same time have this openness towards the unsaid, towards a textured life beyond the skin of the living body. It has the ability, in the words of Todres (2011:185) to allow “the living dimensions of mystery live as mystery, without reducing it to categories of thought”.

6.2.5 A southern African perspective

The title of this research refers clearly to the exploration of the corporeal turn in theology from a southern African perspective. How can this research be marked or identified as “southern African”? The first identifier is the intimate connection between a theologian and

his/her theology and the awareness that it is not possible for me as a South African narrative theologian to put words of theology forward in ordinary language from my living body, based on my bodily experiences in my concrete life-world, that cannot be but southern African. I may have travelled widely, acquired many skills and other languages, having lived in other countries amongst other living bodies, trying to make sense of my bodily experiences, but in the end my social location on southern African soil is profoundly known in my body.

My own bodily narrative is embedded in the wider narrative of Africa, and specifically in the way the bodies and experiences of the body of southern Africans is perceived and interpreted. I have endeavoured to illustrate the connection between social location and bodily knowledge (embodied sensing) in arguing that it is reasonable to conceive that there is a transmission of corporeal narratives from generation to generation, a kind of “embodied history” (a history of bodily knowledge of social location) that comes into being “as flesh gives birth to flesh” (Glancy 2010:5). This argument is based on the notion of social location that is known in the body as expounded by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and further developed in the work of the church historian Jennifer Glancy. Furthermore, it is based on recent research in molecular biology that suggests that trauma can be inherited for up to a hundred generations. Lastly, it is based on the incorporation of the notion of implicit memory. The passionate reaction to the depiction of President Jacob Zuma in the painting “The Spear of the Nation” with his penis exposed, cannot be taken lightly, as mere political hysteria. It is not so easy to forget the past, to forget the trauma inflicted by apartheid or the exploitation of colonialism or the humiliation of poverty or the sexual violations over centuries. When theological anthropology as embodied sensing (with bodily experiences in a concrete life-world as a source of revelation) endeavours to reform or reconstruct, among others, the doctrines of sin, reconciliation, atonement and *imago Dei*, it has to reflect this embodied history and social location. Is it sin when I use my body as a site of resistance against oppression (sexual, political, socio-economic)? How do we talk about reconciliation if the trauma of exploitation and humiliation is so deeply embedded in my flesh and if apartheid is also part of my bodily knowledge and social location, making it difficult for me to talk, touch and socialise with someone who is “other” to me? How do we talk of atonement if it seems to me as if justice is allusive, if groups who benefited from apartheid are still living comfortably and expect of me to “move on” and to forget the past? How do we talk about human dignity when I still feel less than human, when I get exploited like an animal, live in squalor, get raped and then hear that I carry the image of God? How do I believe that when for generations it was embodied in

our flesh that we are uncivilised and one step removed from animals, that we do not reflect the image of God the way civilised, white people do?

The third identifier of this exploration of the corporeal turn as “southern African” is the contribution of the African notion of personhood as expressed in the philosophy of Ubuntu. Kelsey’s theological anthropology is an important correction of anthropocentrism, a value of premodern and some contemporary theological anthropologies. Human bodies are viewed as part of a larger web of living creatures, humans and nonhuman. Ubuntu, essentially, means that *“I am because they are; and they are because I am”*, and embraces the awareness of humans as part of a larger community of living (and dead) creatures. It broadens the respect for the individual (the dignity and rights of each person in the social unit) and purges collectivism of its negative elements; in doing this, it strikes a balance between individual autonomy and homonymy (the subjugation of the individual to group thinking and conformism). A prominent feature of theological anthropology as embodied sensing is a deep awareness of the value of all creatures, humans and nonhuman within a larger web of living creatures. Such a theological anthropology should approach the reconstructing of doctrines from a relational perspective, as proposed by LeRon Shults in his relational theological anthropology.

Theological anthropology as embodied sensing, which develops its enquiries and theological articulations within the intimate and intricate relationship of the living body, bodily experiences in a concrete life-world, and language with an openness to the “more than” (the mystery of the unsaid), has the ability to fully incorporate the corporeal-linguistic turn. This is theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh and a deep sensitivity to the textures of bodily life.

The last verse of the hymn of Brian Wren (1989), dedicated to James Nelson reflects such a theological anthropology as embodied sensing:

Good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,
longing in all, as in Jesus to dwell,
glad of embracing, and tasting, and smell,
good is the body, for good and for God,
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

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